

THE GREEK KALENDS
BY ARTHUR DILLON

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THE GREEK KALENDS

By the same Author

RIVER SONGS AND OTHER POEMS

THE
GREEK KALENDS

BY
ARTHUR DILLON

LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

1905

PR
6007
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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CYMON.

STEPHAN, his Uncle.

LYCOPHRON, Cousin-german to Stephan.

PORPHYRY, a Statuary.

EROS, a Cynic Philosopher.

APOLLOS.

HIS SERVANT.

LIBON, an old Man.

OGYGES, a Demagogue.

A CARPENTER.

IPHIGENIA.

IRENE, Wife to Stephan.

SAPPHIRA, her Sister, Wife to Lycophon.

HESTA } Maidens Attendant on Iphigenia.
HEBE }

EUPHRASIA, Wife to Ogyges.

CARPENTER'S WIFE.

TOWNSMEN AND THEIR WIVES.

Place—An Ionian Island.

Time—One Day.

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SCENE.—*In a Wood: a Ruined Tomb.*

(*Enter* IPHIGENIA, HEBE *and* HESTA.)

IPHIGENIA. These letters we have severally received—

Written by whom?—with fortune-telling craft,
What we would choose at choice, for us do choose.

HESTA. A brace of lovers promised us apiece!

IPHIGENIA. Could heart of handmaid wish more?

HEBE. But for your ladyship?

IPHIGENIA. Oh, ye shall hear, for ye are good girls both. (*Reads.*) “To the white hands of the Lady Iphigenia”—*lily-white* were fairer, but let that pass—“Princess,” it runs, “if thou wouldst delight thine eyes, to the intent to delight other eyes, wait privily, at the corner of the wood beyond the ruined tomb, where is the uprooted ilex.”—That is here! “There look for the means to come by priceless wearing-

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apparel." Tell me, my girls ; tell me, Hesta, and thou, Hebe ; do we not wear jewelled vesture to bring us husbands ; and then wear husbands to keep us in costly raiment ? But to my scripture : " Hast thou a use for a diadem with fillets of braided gold, or a sun-shade hat to balk the sun withal, fashioned in the sphere of Dian's planet ?"—What, have we no milliners on our island, that we must fetch from the moon ? " Here have I swaths incarnadine of dye of Tyre, bordered with honeysuckle : a tunic spangled with stars, edged with the double meander ; and a fringed shawl, the latest wear in Lydia"—that is earthly, and more to the point—" Besides sandals to the measure of thine own footprint in the sand bathing"—worthy shoemaker, so to hunt me down ! Can'st guess who it should be ? Sovran outfits ; Phaeacian Arete had not to compare !—" Herewithal, a crystal mirror, high as an ostrich, wherein to glass thy radiant self. All awaits thee secretly in the woods. Why secretly, I tell thee not. Only thus mayst thou forestall the market, or see others out-shine thee, who by to-morrow shall hear as much from

Yours obsequiously in service,
But no name to be mine."

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Was't worth the journey forth? Nay, cram the fire
With these same idle papers.

HESTA. They will burn out ;
And with their ashes leave it choked and dead.

IPHIGENIA. So oft doth merry sport remembered.
Our torches are to burn. We'll light them, girls,
And carry them bravely, too, above our heads.
I am aweary, ambling from the town.

HEBE. But what of our young men ?

IPHIGENIA. This fashion-monger will not come.
I will to sleep. Come, fan me, I will drowse
Under broad sycamore or cedar boughs,
Till to his western bed the sun hath stooped ;
There will I pout and frown, for I am duped.

HEBE. Mistress, lie down under yon laden tree
Whose blossoms are, unto the skipper bee,
Rich orient islands of the Indian main,
Voyaged unto again and yet again ;
Let humming vans, like feathers in the wind,
Tickle thy fancy to a better mind.

IPHIGENIA. No, I would bathe. Is there no hidden
lake
Near here, to swim, and let the circles break
And talk along the green and slippery marge,
Oaring myself most like a stately barge,

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While ye, my nymphs, keep jealous watch and ward ;
Then dry my curls, on the enamelled sword
That, like a jewel without flaw or fault,
Lies in the casket of the sharp basalt ;
While I, a jewel within a jewel set,
Laugh all amid my locks full showery wet ?

HESTA. I know a cave, not far removed hence,
Dedicate unto virgin temperance,
If the sweet fall of tinkling spring be pure,
As that it is I am abundant sure,
Whose waters like the firmament do sleep,
Cupped in a wondrous basin, welkin-deep,
So perfect, seeming more than natural,
Yet no man's hand hath sculptured it at all.

IPHIGENIA. A brimful bath ! The place I had in
thought.

These letters are but mockery, and mean nought.
Now shall I bear me like a regal swan,
Or like the dolphin in wide ocean
Plunging and capering ; anon to float,
Myself the lonely pilot and the boat,
And dream myself how beauteous, how unseen,
In such array as levelleth a queen
Unto a shepherdess. Wherefore I soon
Will re-array myself all buxome boon --

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Yea, with some haste. Now, Hebe, now I pray,
And, Hesta, loose my clasps and girdle gay.

HEBE. Shall not our wooers come?

HESTA. Let them not, now ;
Or there were blushes to my lady's brow.

HEBE (*sings*).

Tell me not of sadness ;
Thought of it is madness ;
Tell me but of gladness ;
Lull me with a song.
Let me suck the pleasure
Of the honey treasure,
Treasure in full measure,
While the days are long.

Safe from Fortune's malice,
Have I built a palace ;
Deep from beauty's chalice
Quaffing true-love kiss.
If I list the thunder,
Or the earthquake under,
'Tis because then wonder
Thrills my soul with bliss.

Round the tamarisk cover,
Ring-dove, ring-dove, hover ;
Wheel above us over
Ears in meadow-sweet.

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Fools are bent to labour!
To the pipe and tabor,
Neighbour links with neighbour,
So as oft we meet.

In a happy valley,
We will dance and dally,
Bill and coo, and gaily
Banquet in the shade.
Merry tales and modest,
Quips and fancies oddest
Wake thee, if thou noddest
Ere "Good night" be said.

(Exeunt Omnes.)

(Enter APOLLOS and his SERVANT.)

APOLLOS. All these letters are delivered, as superscribed?

SERVANT. Ay, sir.

APOLLOS. Nor no hint dropped as to the writer?

SERVANT. I doubt the messenger be so much as guessed at, and for you, good master, I have been most circumspect and true.

APOLLOS. Be not found about this place.

(Exit SERVANT.)

The handwriting is as secret. Besides, the variety of the bait points to no common origin; it were as nice to think men, monkeys, and atomies sprung from one

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remote ancestor, some maggot in a nutshell. For I have written to the vein of him that reads, not him that wrote—and, to this end, I have suffered entertainment at all men's tables, to know their humours; heard likely tales, of those outside mine acquaintance; and have now decocted each, as I hope, a dish to his special eating; that is, written the most and least, promising to them their heart's desire—so discovered by me—to be had at the cost of a journey hither, naming for the trysting place our noted sepulchre of antiquity here. All the town, by this hour, betakes itself to the road; for my proselytes have grown like snowballs by rolling; every friend-hanger-on bringeth his friends-hangers-on. The highway is thronged; litters, chariots, and saddle-horses, besides the baser sort a-foot. Some are already around me. The Jove-descended Iphigenia and her maidens, whose foible is new fashions, came earliest. Young Cymon, the son of my old friend, I have promised him Castor and Pollux, a horse-trainer and a pugilist; that should win him, the twins high and celestial. Now to lie low. But one forestalls me.

(Enter EROS.)

By my troth, good neighbour Eros, the height of the morn to thee.

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EROS. The baseness of the night sink thee ! Some evil beast hath written me a letter. But that he promiseth me the thing I covet, I would hold communication with no so vile a writer. I would fain see the sourest of humanity, and I am herein promised—how the fellow guesses my desire is beneath all plummet of conjecture—I am herein put in assurance that I shall see human kind so soured, so mean, so misanthropic, as to make me think myself a flatterer when I say man is loathsome.

APOLLOS. But are you promised this ?

EROS. Read, an thou can'st. 'Tis ill written.

APOLLOS. As truly as my name is Apollos, I will perform all he hath promised. Only stand aside and observe; for I promise myself the pleasantest and most joyous laughter that ever caught on to the skirts of cross-purposes. See, others are early walkers. Here comes Ogyges, nothing noble but his name; like a fine title to a foolish book. Being a demagogue, he would make himself a demi-god.

(Enter OGYGES with a letter, and CARPENTER.)

OGYGES. It shall be passed in the Council of Elders that every Councillor-Elder shall lose his vote; and that all men's work shall be done for them; and that the servant shall beat his master upon the

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least incivility; and that every man shall take off his cap to his inferior; and that no man shall speak first, lest he seize the royal power, and abuse his neighbour. All these, good fellow workman, are assured us for certainties, if we but meet by our tribes and families.

CARPENTER. And we come, Ogyges, all the trades, by our nouns of multitude. But who hath done this, Ogyges?

OGYGES. No matter, if he be good as his word. We are agreed we quarrel over the spoil?

CARPENTER. Sworn!

OGYGES. Go, then, before.

(Exit CARPENTER.)

(Enter EUPHRASIA.)

EUPHRASIA. I will make broth of thy bones, Ogyges. Come thy ways home. Gird up thy loins, gird; carry water, while thy old wife swabs.

OGYGES. But, good Euphrasia——

EUPHRASIA. Where hast been, sir? Answer not me, sir! Thou knowest I can brush thine hair with a besom.

OGYGES. I know it; I do confess it. But all the town waits for me; they hang upon my lips.

EUPHRASIA. Hang upon thy lips? hang upon the

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gallows! But that I made the priest read me the writing on this slip of skin, thou mightest have slept through my fingers all day, and come home at night and bawled for dinner.

OGYGES. I never bawl for dinner.

EUPHRASIA. I know't. But thou wouldst if thou durst. What have thy ne'er-do-well companions to say?

OGYGES. They will listen, if you will speak to them, Euphrasia,

EUPHRASIA. I speak to them? I will; and let them learn the rights of it.

OGYGES. Not one of us leaders but hath received a solemn warning to the aforesaid effect; but I doubt some one hath tampered with certain of the men, securing them milk and honey without elbow-grease, which scrapes the butter off our bread.

EUPHRASIA. Thou talkest by the bushel, Ogyges. Me? Keep me waiting? Get thee up home, or I'll carry thee.

(Enter CARPENTER'S WIFE.)

WIFE. Ye lead away my husband, the carpenter, from his work and me. I have sure news of it.

EUPHRASIA. Ogyges, you are false; you love this woman!

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WIFE. Pole-cat !

EUPHRASIA. Spit and swear !

WIFE. Catamountain !

EUPHRASIA. Screech owl.

WIFE. Thou dam of ugly children !

EUPHRASIA. Crayfish !

OGYGES. Can the state prosper thus ? Call up my myrmidons ! Ho !

(Re-enter CARPENTER.)

CARPENTER. Thou shalt not pull my wife's hair out.

EUPHRASIA. I will pull out as much hair as will lade a hay-cart. I'll leave not a bristle on your starveling half-face, either !

(Exit EUPHRASIA, chasing CARPENTER.)

OGYGES. We had best run and hide.

(Exit, with CARPENTER'S WIFE.)

EROS. Here hath some mischief-maker called out of their reeky dens all and sundry who cannot meet without strife. 'Tis well devised for a man-hater, upon my soul.

APOLLOS. Now hath some lover of Thalia called hither all the nincompoops of our city, to instruct the beasts of the field in harmless noise.

EROS. Here follows one, a fop who cannot think

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himself at peace without his sword ; who, if he meet his cousin-german, will make himself or his cousin very harmless. They have a deadly quarrel afoot, and will slay one another ; which will make me laugh.

APOLLOS. I had forgot this. They must not meet.

EROS. Mar not mischief.

APOLLOS. Of a truth, it is that fire-eater, that spit-fire, Lycophron.

EROS. An he eat fire, and spit it out again, he is a foul fiend indeed. Stand close.

(Enter LYCOPHRON.)

LYCOPHRON. An idiot trick it is to speak aloud ; But then—good sooth, I like my tone of voice. Now for my cousin. My most foolish wife, To whom I am a star, is stolen from home—Belike, for I neglect her. So I do, And so I will. It is a whining fool. And yet she loves me, and I cannot think But she will love me ever. 'Tis the trick Of sufferance. Were she like my cousin's wife, Who is her sister—for we married twins—I should suspect she paid me out in kind, Neglect unto neglect ; but she is tame, Oh, my Sapphira is tame ; she has but fled Unto her mother, and her father's house ;

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And thence, poor sheep, will steal back, by-and-bye,
And own herself in the wrong. It standing thus,
This letter comes me in, and tells me straight—
For which I thank the Unknown—that I may beard
My cousin Stephan here, even hand to hand—
On some import important so drawn on—
And here upbraid him. If he anger me,
I am likely to upbraid him with my sword.

APOLLOS. This goes too far.

EROS. 'Tis done scurvily. But we lay not the
hounds on the scent.

LYCOPHRON. We took two sisters; he, most decorously,
Did smugly court the parents. I, more fool,
Mainly to humour my Sapphira's thought,
Who vowed the bridegroom that should conquer her
Must never give her choice, did seize her forth
And made a hare-brained marriage, good in law.
Wherefore her wealthy father and mine own
Laid all their goods on Stephan and Irene.
Well, I repent it not; 'twas bravely done.
But for my cousin's profiting, great Mars,
I would not change my shoes for so-got gold.
And, for the fact, I long to cross swords for it.
Have I not cause to hate him? And besides

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And chiefly—I have two strings to my bow
Wherewith I'd shoot him—I suspect his eyes
Do rove as far aloft as Iphigenia
Who is my own choice goddess secretly ;
So that my rancour hath a double sting,
A sharp point, and a barb whereon to hang.

(*Enter SAPPHIRA.*)

Hey-day, my pretty partner ! In good sooth,
What is it, Sapphira ?

SAPPHIRA. Thou !

Oh, I am tearful ; no deserted maid
Is more forlorn upon the tide-washed shore,
Watching her sailor sail, than your true wife.

LYCOPHRON. Why, what's the matter ? Who hath
injured you ?

I will avenge thy wrong. Thy wrong is mine.

SAPPHIRA. Oh, comfort ; yet not to the point at all.
Oh, I am love-sick ; I do fear thou art cold.

LYCOPHRON. Did I not lose my fortune for thy
hand ?

SAPPHIRA. And I am grateful.

LYCOPHRON. So am I, dear wife,
That you did lose as much to wed with me.
But I have business here, of stern import.
Why are you come ?

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SAPPHIRA.

This letter, Lycophron.

I fear too flattering, it gives me hope

You wish my more society. Sweet, read.

LYCOPHRON (*reads*). "Thrice happy Sapphira,
your god-like husband shall meet you by the old
hero's tomb, with all the tenderness of early wooing.

Yours and a well-wisher."

This is thrice strange. How came this?

SAPPHIRA. I know not. Could I else but leave
our door

Even in the guardianship of its own latch,

And careless keeping of light slaves at home,

Knowing my treasure thence, and come to thee?

But for thy greeting; must I beg for that?

O noble Lycophron, let me complain.

Oh, solitude doth make me timorous!

I hear the death-tick knocking in the beam;

Or, with a sudden creak, the joists do groan.

Then, you remember, once our city wall

Hath cracked with boding roar, and once again

The stones did move upon their beds last night.

I fear at last such visitation breaks

The bubble of our life.

LYCOPHRON.

'Tis venturesome

To live, I do allow, since life must die.

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SAPPHIRA.

O Lycophron,

I heard a wise man teach there is decay
And twilight for the fixed or wandering stars ;
The moon shall drop into our laps, or shoot
Into the ambient space ; while underfoot,
Crouched in the concave, in imprisoned rage,
Old Demogorgon boils ; so that, in truth,
We tread our measure on a crust of earth
Thinner than brittle egg-shell over fires
That undermine us. Then, love, if we lie
So helpless 'twixt the finger and thumb of Fate
As but to think it silences our speech,
Holding us awestruck, why wilt thou so wrong
The happiness whose tenure is so frail,
Hung like a rainbow on a passing shower,
In the mid air on insecurity?
My meat, my drink, my raiment is thy love.
You leave me hungry and so very cold
I hardly fear the hap though we were struck
By counter planets. I would sit all day
And sing to thee, or all day hold my peace,
If that were pleasanter, so thou would'st court
My company, nay, so thou grant me thine.

LYCOPHRON. Back, ready tears ; nay, if thou cry,
I'll melt.

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Sapphira, I have wed a cornflower
Wan in its azure as a sickly lily.
It were a fault to be less fond than thou.
I know it is thy love. Come to my breast
That is a castle founded upon rock,
Yea, fit to harbour thee against all storms,
And is made strong because thou art made weak.
Oh, what a precious right to shelter thee !
Have patience, my Sapphira.

SAPPHIRA. Heigho, for it !
That patience is the perquisite of wives !
But I will wear it as a diadem ;
If thou wilt let me think thou lovest me yet.

LYCOPHRON. Be thou content, I am content to
reign.

SAPPHIRA. Oh, how thou lov'st thy power ! May
I stay now ?

LYCOPHRON. Well, well, I am thy lord. But if I
bid—

Rare satellite, sith thou wilt circle me—
An if I meet my cousin—for my mind
Is fraught to speak with him—then stand aloof ;
It is a wife's part.

SAPPHIRA. And I am a wife.

(Exeunt LYCOPHRON and SAPPHIRA.)

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APOLLOS. A pretty idyl as ever I saw. Here, lo, the poet of form ; he who makes bronze and marble live. Some say he, like the rest, adores Iphigenia.

EROS. And many more say he adores himself.

APOLLOS. He gives his thought audible words, for the better disguising of his meaning.

(*Enter PORPHYRY.*)

PORPHYRY (*Reads*). " Porphyry, I have peered into thy depths ;

Thou art enamoured, and dost waste in love
Of intellectual, absolute loveliness.
She comes to thee, the mistress of thy dream,
And leads thee forth to lose thyself and her,
Her complete beauty, thine incomplete self.
Oft, thou assayest, in thy mimicry,
With hand which, though a dreamer's, hath a nerve,
To carve and sculpture her eternity,
In the most precious sort our artists use
And in the basest. Whether reddish marl
Baked in the stove, the craft of Tanagra,
Or creamy ivory and yellow gold,
Chryselephantine, gold that will express
The smallest and the largest thought of smith,
And the hard tusk 'tis labouring bliss to grave,
Or supple earth that takes imprint of thumb,

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Serving thine art, but shewed thine art astray."
All this is true. I could not have set down
My fevered unrest fuller. Here he adds—
But who he is I know not—"Porphyry"—
To know the malady is to know the cure—
"Porphyry, let thy solitary feet
Follow the phantom of thy lonely thought
To explore mountain fastnesses, and breathe
The quickening air of verdant forest morns.
But hie thee first, with unattended speed
Unto the earthquake-riven tomb whose stones
Are clasped in ivy and displaced with roots
Wedged under them of brown ambrosial trees.
There sleep; and let thy visions lead thee forth,
A spelled somnambulist, where thou shall tempt
The edge of inaccessible cliffs, and walk
Above the winds, in converse mystical
With the long hope of thy desired despair."
Oh, to embrace pure beauty, and surcease
And perish, for my glorious impudence!
One moment were an age, an age for aye,
Infinite as the thin ethereal air.
This forest is an entry magical
Into the realm of gentle Daimons, Powers
That, supernaturally, are beast and man.

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I can descry them; second sight is come;
Two satyrs yonder bend, with faces brown,
Out of the shadow; one is plump, and laughs,
A happy faun of the fat middle life;
The other lean and grizzly like a goat
That age hath somewhat shrunk. How they peered
forth,
And drew themselves into the briars again!
Had they goat's legs? And tails? I make no doubt.
But I did never love confusion
Of the true lineaments of diverse forms.
Give me a horse, a perfect thing of breed,
The prototype—no winged Pegasus,
Or worse, no centaur—that is horrible;
And let me set upon him one that curbs,
A cleanly man or woman, in the nude,
As bronze could give them shape, no blemishes;
No mermaid moist, coiling her nether limbs
To fulsome fish; this would I banish quite.
Dreams, dreams, I strive with unrealities.
How Fancy every step this morning dogs!
Wending my way by many a hanger chill
With dewy moss, and hollows cold as night,
Under each dropping well I almost swore
A living statue clung against the cliff.

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Yea, why may not yon bush, yon writhen bay
Harbour a sap-fed nymph among its wreaths
Which, parting, shewed me flash of floral eyes,
Yea, eyes like flowers beaming pale moonish green?
So lively hath this wood, so suddenly,
Become around me; I shall marvel nought
If I shall see a human brother kneel
And woo the curled fern-fronds for his bride;
All men, all flowers have loves and histories.
This page lays bare my history in love.
Oh, how these lines beguile poor Porphyry,
Till, more than I am I, I feel them Me!

(Exit.)

APOLLOS. Which of us looks like a goat that is
shrunk in years?

EROS. Which of us looks like a butter-and-floury
confectioner that hath licked his sticky fingers?
Licked and liked them? Say that? I had rather
be a he-goat, and browse brushwood to the roots,
yea, roots and all; than be haltered to my crib for a
stalled ox.

APOLLOS. The sting of the plaster is in the appli-
cation. We shall hear no good of ourselves.

EROS. We shall see much ill of others.

APOLLOS. Here sails the stately Irene—in high

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dudgeon—perhaps for crockery broken; or shall we hear the household gods arraigned for petty larceny?

(Enter IRENE.)

IRENE. Here comes my husband, panting after me. Well, let him come; he woos his torment so.

(Enter STEPHAN.)

STEPHAN. Irene, thou and I do never quarrel. Nay, stint to tap thy toe upon the ground As thou didst run a treadle, and didst spin. I shall lose patience.

IRENE. Easier said than done. Thou hast no patience. Lose what thou hast, Honour, wife, life itself; but never say Thou wilt lose patience.

STEPHAN. Irene—
Irene, I do honour thee too much
To call too much in question what thou dost.
But we, who fly the colours of a name
Second to none among our citizens,
May not so tempt defaming levity,
As they who sit not in so full a glare;
We need keep credit with sobriety,
While if 'tis thought I lack, or but run low,
I, being on the bench of judicature,
Have busy enemies, too numerous

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And petty to be seen. Why art thou here?
I do not put it thou shouldst not be here;
Thou art as royally free as any queen;
But bound, as queens are, by their royalty,
Whose golden chains do keep them prisoners
Within their palaces, as iron gyves
In common prisons keep our felons in.
Yet 'tis imprisonment that honour bears;
And thou shouldst bear it for thyself and me.
I find our home a vacancy ; supposing
Some pompous function of our city called
Our matrons duly forth, I left it so.
Then here—drawn hither on some gravity
Linked with the place I hold and hope to hold—
I find you, unattended. Why is this ?
I ever wish you to be retinued.

IRENE. I will return your speech, though at less
length.

I came here on a letter I received.
Oh, you do finely gloss your private spleen
Of jealousy under judicial care !
Thou art a nobleman, a magistrate,
An elder of our weal; patron of art,
One of our equal generals in war,
Whose past makes all men think the future yours,

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And yet no prouder than to hearken after
Some tittle-tattle which thou fear'st to hear.
I will not show this letter, though thou ask
Whether I ought, or no !

STEPHAN. Take care, Irene.

IRENE. How easy 'twere to tear it into shreds.
And with the serviceable, make-peace lie,
The little, harmless, the white, leprous lie,
Shall I say exculpate, or inculcate ?
Which shall it be ?

STEPHAN. Why did you pace away,
I come in sight? I shall not doubt your word.

IRENE. See, then, I tear the evidence, and speak.
Why, noble Stephan, are you here to-day?
It were as fair a question to be asked.

STEPHAN. A letter full of promise reached me.

IRENE. So?

Thou hast a letter also?

STEPHAN. Read it.

IRENE. Thank you.

I will not bore mine eyes to read it, though.

STEPHAN. Do as thou wilt in that. It keeps me here.

And if thou, madam, wilt but deign to walk
The path that I shall tread, I shall be honoured

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With beauty that doth make men envy me.
Here I attend affairs. If you would know them,
They are open in your hand. I saw my cousin
Down yonder glade. Him may I chance to meet.
He frowns upon me ever, which is ill
Between near kinsmen. I will pray him mend.

IRENE. Didst thou see Lycophron?

STEPHAN.

Why?

IRENE. I hoped thou hadst not.
He owes a grudge; because the earthquake split
Our city wall, he thinks it was your spite.
What wouldst thou think if I should shew him
favours,
And give thy rating cause?

STEPHAN.

O wanton woman,
Thou knew'st he was i' the woods. My cousin 'twas
Drew thee out like a fickle tide. I have wronged
him,

Or so he thinks, which, with that sort of man,
Is all as good or bad. Yes, jade, I doubt thee.
And thou wert like enough, conjoined with him,
To rid the world of me and his poor wife
Who wearies him, I know. Thou art most fit
To rule the roystering table he would keep
If he were freed. But ere that come about,

THE GREEK KALENDS

This very day, perhaps, he meets with me !

IRENE. Stephan, thou hast said that unto my face—

Follow or no, or love or hate at will !

(Exit.)

APOLLOS. Let us talk with this lord. Save you, my lord Stephan.

STEPHAN. Save you, sweet Apollos. A curse in disguise she is. *(Aside.)*

APOLLOS. And bitter Eros.

STEPHAN. Mine to you, good gentlemen. To sound no jar outwardly. *(Aside.)*

APOLLOS. The race is not always to the swift. You have walked fast ; you are ruffled.

STEPHAN. Not more, I think, than a slower pace will smooth.

APOLLOS. Yet the race is not always to the slow. But proverbs, my lord, are brachs that will cry counter on the scent ; “ Too many cooks spoil the broth ” is not wiser than “ Too many broths spoil the cook ” ; — “ An hour lost in the morning,” or “ Lose an hour’s sleep in the morning, and seek it all day in vain.” However, my humour, to-day, is to swear this forest, and an early breath is better than a dis-tempered couch ; we seek health where she dwells.

THE GREEK KALENDS

EROS. Infecting the woods with our diseases.

APOLLOS. Tell me, is not good company fresh air to the mind? To talk even with a meddlesome friend is often to drown a great plague in a little trouble.

STEPHAN. We in the world have both great plagues and little plagues. Welcome, sir, to all but the greatest of mine, that is, my wife. You are a man, fair Apollos, to warm all hearts that lie immediately open. What is it in you? I cannot say; but so it is. Not health, a strange matter brings me here. You know the hereditary Head of our Order, my nephew, Cymon; a youth not dull, a lord of land, and yet hath learned nothing in the schools but—well, he sinks himself to dicers; hobnobs with pot-boys, ostlers, and so forth——

EROS. So that all affined to him disregard him. 'Tis the town talk.

STEPHAN. We suffer disgrace in his person, but we do not disregard him. It is hinted to me, here he shall turn over a new leaf, where our nobles' pride lies somewhat sick for him; and that I, humbly, be the instrument. The text is addressed to me. "To the Lord Stephan." 'Tis unsigned.

APOLLOS. I hope this from my heart, my lord.

THE GREEK KALENDS

EROS. So do not I. (*Aside.*) See, here comes one uglier and worse favoured than them all.

STEPHAN. His favour is not amiss.

EROS. Then it is his disfavour that portends his soul.

(*Enter CYMON, reading a letter.*)

APOLLOS. This is that very Cymon Lord Stephan moralises upon. Fall we back.

CYMON (*Reading*). If I will talk with trees—a “talking oak”? He has read poetry, and I cannot understand him. But here he goes on—

APOLLOS. He talks in his whiskers; I cannot take him.

EROS. I think he is a toad, and is afraid lest the jewel drop out of his mouth.

STEPHAN (*Discovering himself*). Good my compeer, Cymon.

CYMON. Jove deliver thee, uncle, from all nephews. Are you turned to forestry at last?

STEPHAN. I hoped you might turn to delicacy, glitter among our youth, and prove our most exquisite exquisite.

CYMON. If I do, you shall be my dancing master; before then, I hope to make you less of a greenhorn here.

THE GREEK KALENDS

STEPHAN. I do think you muddy a choice spirit. Among thy equals thou art at a *nonplus* for ignorance; or is it by design; as we say the monkeys will not be heard to speak lest we set them to work?

CYMON. Whether is easier, to seem to know what one does not, or to hide what one knows? A man may walk with his nose in a book, and not know his letters.

STEPHAN. Or star-gaze, in bland know-nothing of the heavenly bodies. Oh, inky fingers merit ostracism. A gentleman studies not to appear to study, but to appear with the fruits of it.

CYMON. But if it be not the time of year for plums?

STEPHAN. If thy parts are golden, let them shine; where thou lackest, hammer the gold thou hast thin over, and make it shine also. But thou wilt be neither a dancer nor a fencer, unless to beat down a guard with a bludgeon; which, by your leave, Lord Cymon, be it spoken——

CYMON. Stephan, Stephan, your tongue would mince spinach. Dear man alive! I know every bird of the air by flight and call.

(*Re-enter* CARPENTER.)

What saith my friend? (*Looking at letter*). This must be one of the men he means.

THE GREEK KALENDS

CARPENTER. I have cozened and run from Ogyges' good dame! Gi' ye good morrow, sir; good morrow.

CYMON. Are you a horse-tamer?

CARPENTER. No, sir.

CYMON. Or a boxer?

CARPENTER. No, sir, I am a carpenter. We are here in great strength. Ogyges, Ageselaus, and Bellerophon have called out the whole township.

CYMON. Then you are not a horse-tamer, nor a boxer? Do you fancy dogs?

CARPENTER. I have a tyke at home is dog at rats.

STEPHAN. Water will to the sea; my cousin will to baseness. Lycophron and Irene fill my thoughts.
(*Aside.*)

(*Exit STEPHAN.*)

CARPENTER. The old father hath a dog will draw a badger.

CYMON. Ay; if thou thrust him into the hole tail foremost, he will come out with the badger on him.

CARPENTER. May be, sir.

CYMON. But have none of you brought your dogs with you?

CARPENTER. Some of us have, sir.

CYMON. Then let us go ratting in the old barn below the spinney.

THE GREEK KALENDS

OGYGES (*Within*). Men and brethren, down with the Oligarchs!

(*Shouting within, "Down with the Oligarchs!"*)

CARPENTER. That is our rallying cry. Fair befall you, sir.

(*Exit, shouting, "Down with the Oligarchs!"*)

CYMON. These town-bred loons have no grit in them. This scrawl appoints me to meet two men of mettle.

(*Re-enter PORPHYRY.*)

Ho, Porphyry?

PORPHYRY. Ah, that horse you promised—

CYMON. As a model—

PORPHYRY. For my great "Chariot of Helios" that is commissioned.

CYMON. I will lend him.

PORPHYRY. He is the non-pareil of his race.

CYMON. So, so. He stands well on his pasterns, has a clean shoulder, a high chine, a good quarter, and carries his tail; though that is a fancy; I have known fine fencers tuck the tail in; he will carry weight, and stay: I will warrant him there; eye of stag, skin of woman;—I know not what you sculptors want, but I can tell his stock on both sides to six generations. But you set no store by pedigree.

THE GREEK KALENDS

(*Enter LIBON.*)

LIBON. Oh, the shame of beggary! I am frail with hunger. (*Aside.*) Kind sirs, I am faithfully promised in this letter help; and there is none to help. Oh, my back catches me across! Oh!

CYMON. You cry on a cold scent, man.

LIBON. Good sir, I am not used to tune my tongue to beg. I am forespent.

PORPHYRY. Thou demi-semi-quaver, peace! I will cast him.

CYMON. Cast him? I had rather lose ten talents in a night, than that he should be cast.

PORPHYRY. I mean, found him in metal; not cast him down.

CYMON. I will hold him for you myself; I will not trust a stableman.

PORPHYRY. You are too good.

CYMON. I will be as good as my word.

PORPHYRY. Adieu, Cymon.

CYMON. Pleasant dreams.

(*Exit PORPHYRY.*)

I could snore like a harvester, if I had but a truss of straw under me.

(*Exit CYMON.*)

LIBON. The ease promised, I fear me, means but

THE GREEK KALENDS

a quiet grave. I am these score years bed-ridden, and this jaunt is like to kill me.

(Exit.)

APOLLOS. A crazy patch-work of men and women.

EROS. Which is better, to eat a musty egg after a fresh, or a fresh egg after a musty? Which is happier, to review honest folk, and after to find fools and knaves; or, beginning with fools and knaves, to put no faith in subsequent honesty; as a fresh egg, be it never so sweet, relisheth nought after one that hath overstaid his welcome?

(Re-enter IRENE.)

IRENE. He made me hate him in his prudery; Oh, I forgive him, in his jealousy! He hath deserved this fit. These littered scraps Wherewith I strewed this unenclosed turf Are not my letter. That shall speak for me When I shall give it leave. What brings me here—

The words were but "Irene, come and see!" And nothing more. Now to my husband's side, Where I will walk severe and silently, Until he wears into a state of grace. But let me read his letter, after all.

APOLLOS. Now hath the fox gone away.

THE GREEK KALENDS

IRENE (*Reading*). "Cymon rehabilitate?" There
I lack faith.

My husband "chosen Archon for the year;"
And I to bear my part? This should go well.
"Iphigenia in the woods." That's fulsome,
If he do follow her.

(*Exit.*)

APOLLOS.

Oh, Comedy!

Laughter gives axle-grease to the wheel o' the
sun;

Makes lightning swifter, water up hill run.

Thalia, there is saving salt in mirth

That seasons converse from the rotting earth.

Oh, would our laughter were as kind and true

And free from mocks as song-birds' glad ado;

To fill these glades and groves with careless notes

As ever well at full from feathered throats.

I hope no harm is happed; for I am none

To hurt in sport; yet would, when all is done,

Forgive the Sybarite for one wholesome smile

Over his purple cheeks of greed and guile.

Prophets are good; but he that cheers the heart

Hath more than many prophets to impart.

EROS. These people do not hate roundly enough
for me.

THE GREEK KALENDS

APOLLOS (*Sings*).

Aha, ye masters of bold jest
Who whilome shook the world's round sides
With crowing laughter, now ye rest.
Laughter dieth ; death abides.

Your jests are seasoned, and your glee
Mellows, now your brains are mould.
Oh, who will laugh an hour with me ;
Laugh a long year, blow hot, blow cold ?

Oh, who will laugh a hundred years ?
Oh, who will grieve a little space ?
For ho, for ho, for laughter's tears !
But grief it killeth man apace !

Get thee gone, thou breast of stone !
Thou kill-joy heart, come not me near !
Or an if thou wilt not begone,
Then banish me, and lord it here.

EROS. Groaning, groaning ; not music !

APOLLOS. Will you have another stave ?

EROS. Oh, for marrow-bones and cleavers, to harmonise it !

APOLLOS. But I will teach you a song for you to sing.

EROS. I will not give myself a sore throat to sing it.

THE GREEK KALENDS

APOLLOS. Here 'tis; hear it. (*Sings.*)

My heart is glad my breast within,
I am the last of all my kin;
For year by year hath seen them fall
Like autumn leaves that are the pall
The lifeless earth doth lap her in.

It is a tug with no one now.
Each one hath ploughed and ceased to plough.
Yet sometimes I am this-wise vext,
I sigh, "Ah me, my turn is next;
I cannot live for aye, I trow!"

Certes, I were in goodly case,
Could I out-wear our common race,
And be the only man alive!
I am a fool too wise to wive;
A cynic tub my dwelling place.

EROS. Here is a tag for a chorus—

To go scot free
Of slander, hate and robbery,
Is, all unknown,
To live alone!

APOLLOS. I have a charm to be rid of you.

EROS. What is that? A show of a golden wedding day?

APOLLOS. Peals of laughter. But be eyes and ears.
(*Enter SERVANT of APOLLOS, and HESTA.*)

THE GREEK KALENDS

HESTA. Begone, begone ; or I will scratch your face else.

SERVANT. Good mistress maid, the place is thine and thy mistress' too, for the asking. I am addressed, on my master's affairs, towards the very opposite direction.

HESTA. So thou sayest, but loiterest. Begone !
Be off, be off, be off, be off, be off, be off !

(Exeunt HESTA and SERVANT.)

APOLLOS. What maketh my man here still ?

(Re-enter PORPHYRY and HEBE.)

PORPHYRY. Let go my wrists, thou overmastering maid.

Thou goest the way to tempt immodesty,
Using such horseplay with a stranger man.

Let go my wrists, or I will master thine.

Girl, you will make me angry ; leave me loose !

(Exeunt.)

(Re-enter CYMON.)

CYMON. By Bacchus, I could swear the earth shook under me ! What say they in these parts ? That the island hath an itch of shaking ? Folk's tales have set me dreaming so. I cannot sleep now. There is a pool here ; I'll plunge in it.

(Exit.)

THE GREEK KALENDS

APOLLOS. An empty stage! I will to another part of the field, and court more confusions.

EROS. Make cat's meat of yourselves! Your carcases are not worth the brine it cost to cure ye! A single spy I, henceforth!

(Exeunt severally.)

(Re-enter PORPHYRY and HEBE.)

PORPHYRY. Good cause to drive me back! But never fear;

Never will I, with profane foot, come near
To harass or to fright thy Iphigene
While she is bathing in her secure den.
Another—for I feel that such men are—
So pure, might gaze as wizard at a star.
I am too weak to tempt so strong a trial.
My saucy looks were Circe's baleful vial
Emptied into the pool where Scilla dived,
Most potently enchanted and contrived
To writhe her smooth limbs into horrent hounds;
Until my bad invasion confounds
Her sanctuary of white solitude.
Beauty tames savages, makes mild men rude.
If one of male sort, like a hoofed Pan,
Do pry into the bath of chaste Dian,
O fell remorse, as taking part with her,

THE GREEK KALENDS

Chase him and be his executioner !

HEBE. Thou shalt be changed into a good dragon ;
such as lay on Alcestis' doorstep.

PORPHYRY. Do not praise me so ;
I lived in a fool's paradise, and thought
I was immaculate. How do I stand ?
I dare not venture, nor assay my fate.
I am not all I should be. Oh, henceforth,
I follow beauty where she subtly works
In moral excellence, as if a shade
Of light, if such thing be, or steam distilled
From the pearly sea-shell by the watchful stars,
Unto the coarser sense invisible,
But efficacious to mould the race,
With each successive and begotten child,
A lifetime nearer to the Beautiful.
Oh ! let me succour age with honeyed bread ;
And want myself, that other lips be fed.

(Exit PORPHYRY.)

(Re-enter HESTA.)

HESTA. I have turned back a sturdy slave ; him
that serves Apollos.

HEBE. And I the inspired Porphyry. Two men
routed.

THE GREEK KALENDS

HESTA. But who is here? The uncouth Cymon,
transported like a Pythoness!

(Re-enter CYMON.)

CYMON. Depart from me. I am a sinful
man,
And need to be alone.

HESTA. What crime, what crime?
He filleth me with awe and dread; his lips
Are very white as lilies.

HEBE. To our post, Hesta!

HESTA. Is he possessed, prophetic, mad, in love?
(Exeunt HESTA and HEBE.)

CYMON. Give me air, light and room, the world,
the sky!

I have forgot my course; the narrow banks
That, like a sluggish river, I scarce wore,
Are hidden with my flood. Oh, who am I?
I am not Cymon; I would sooner think
I am Apollo—which I sure am not,
For I do feel the ground I walk upon
Is earth and not the clouds. But it is earth
Glorified with a knowledge, knowledge, knowledge—
Oh, is this love? I know 'tis ecstasy;
But doubt it be so common, so well worn,
As other men may even feel the like.

THE GREEK KALENDS

No other living soul hath felt the like.
I saw her—was it by unholy chance,
Or holy fate above us? But these woods
Shall never hear of it. The rocks around
Were sworn, I am convinced, to secrecy;
And water tells no tales, but closes up
On wilful drowning, or upon mischance,
Or sport of beauty in the yielding flood,
Then smooths its element. O rocks, O stream,
I'll whisper you. Open your cavernous ears,
Ye deep down-whelming pools, ye gullies wide,
And, O ye rifts agape that mutely yawn;
Then drown me; ye have heard the worst! Behold,
I faced divinest Iphigene unclad.
Methinks the crystal water was a robe
Around her flung; but, when she rose ashore,
The crystal air did robe her. Quake, oh, quake,
I have seen a ghost, she is not flesh, a ghost!
Quake under me, O knees; kneel, kneel! *Actæon*
Was turned into a beast by such a sight;
I, beast, am made a Genius! Mine eyes,
Contrarying cockatrices', died to look.
Yea, when our eyes met, I did swoon away;
I swooned and fell whereas I stood alive.
Come to myself, I, looking where she had been,

THE GREEK KALENDS

Adored more than admired. Let me give thanks.
I only sought the pond to plunge and bathe ;
Then, in the twinkling of an eye, no more,
Saw heaven—and live. Transfiguration !
I am no poet, nor can turn no rhyme ;
But manhood reigns within me, like a god
Inheriting a desert. That's to till.
Too long have I run riot at my will.

(Exit.)

*(Re-enter STEPHAN and IRENE, followed by EROS un-
observed.)*

STEPHAN. My only doubt is what was in that writ
Thou tearest up so fine. I guess the drift.
It is a spur upon thy heel, I see,
Thou'lt rather wear than use. Shall I begrudge
Thee parlour strategy ? It makes me mad !
That madness will I on my cousin loose ;
But for good name's sake will speak fair with thee.

IRENE. I will as much by thee, my jealous lord.

STEPHAN. This is more comely, my Irene, far,
Than separate to walk, more seemly, sure,
To shew a seamless union to the world.

IRENE. Let us converse, then. Hast thou not
decreed
How Porphyry our palace beautifies,

THE GREEK KALENDS

In measure—as our wealth to hint, not be—
Shewing, not swallowing up, our opulence?
Talk of these grand designs.

STEPHAN. When we are home, love.

(Exeunt STEPHAN and IRENE.)

EROS. Woe betide ye, connubials; clash together like the blades of shears! A parricide hemmed in a sack, by the Roman law, with a cock, an asp, and an ape, has near neighbours less offensive than ye to one another. By the path ye go, there is a sort of arrant beggar, Libon, will stick closer than by wedlock's manacles, ere ye may shake him off. Here they come back, coagulate, glued in his cobweb of mendacity.

(Exit.)

(Re-enter STEPHAN and IRENE, with PORPHYRY leading in LIBON.)

STEPHAN. Here is a drachma, hire you porters for him;

There are no lack abroad. I muse to guess
Why they should let bench, loom, and anvil play,
And, with the idlest of the idle, scour
The lean and hungry sides of this bare wood.
There is commotion made. It were my place
To call it in question when I am returned.
Irene, these broad glades solace the rich,

THE GREEK KALENDS

Not the laborious ; we walk well in them.

IRENE. Very well indeed. Who is this unfortunate ?

Let him have carriers ; let this pay their pains.

PORPHYRY. No soul is near, though thousands hereabout ;

Why, I am lost to know. But, good lord Stephan,
As thou art known for kind, put to thine hand
Which is more worth than silver ; and so used,
More honorable than gold. I will, with speed,
Cut me two saplings, lay my cloak athwart ;
And on such litter lay this aged man
Who pleads the estimation of his needs,
Not of his worship.

STEPHAN. I do not love the work.

PORPHYRY. Yet shew you love the man.

IRENE. Well urged. But truly—

I pray you think I speak for modesty

And measure, never from a flinty heart—

Is there so great cause ? To be charitable

Maketh no shew of charitable deeds.

I would not bid a water-carrier

Give pearls ; but gird himself ; and, what he hath,

Lend brawn and muscle. By the selfsame rule,

I grudge not what we use to give, but grudge

THE GREEK KALENDS

To go beyond our occupation,
Playing at goodness in a sort of masque
Which rather were extravagant than kind.
As I excuse my husband, I do thee ;
Make not thyself a beast of burden, youth ;
But, with this trifling silver, hire thee aid,
Which is not far to seek. For thee, old man,
Who well deservest, I will warrant thee,
I wish thee comfortable, prosperous speed.

STEPHAN. 'Twere all as well I humoured him.

IRENE. No, thou shalt not.

This were as much unseemly, run upon
With no proved need, as I would call it meet,
Perhaps, were these Cimmerian wastes, ourselves,
We scanty four, the population
Four long days' journey round. Never too much.
Good youth, we press our silver.

STEPHAN. Aye, by all means.
And, wise Irene, I have angered thee ;
Hold no more out. I verily surmise
Some mocking practice in these messages,
That lures us on to barbed hooks. By Pan !
Once more I'll beat the wood from end to end,
And then go home. It is as like as not
My cousin Lycophron, in my contempt,

THE GREEK KALENDS

Sets this upon me. He shall sting for it,
Next time we meet. Irene.

IRENE. Find succour for thy ancient charge, and
home.

(Exeunt STEPHAN and IRENE.)

PORPHYRY. Oh, these cold hearts!

LIBON. Thou art but strange to misfortune, if
thou exclaim at this.

PORPHYRY. Here is a court of appeal.

LIBON. Let me alone here.

(Re-enter EUPHRASIA and CARPENTER.)

EUPHRASIA. Thou dost not make off again! I
will shake my good man by the nape of the neck.
Leave *me*! Am not I his lawful married wife?

CARPENTER. I know not which way to seek him.

EUPHRASIA. This is of set purpose.

LIBON. Good woman, I need bread; bread.

EUPHRASIA. I am a good woman, indeed. I am
bent on finding my good man.

LIBON. For fair charity's sake——

EUPHRASIA. Beg of the gentles, we have nought.
Hold, here is a bent farthing; pack! Out, scrannel,
whining milksop (*To CARPENTER*), that durst not be
drunken for fear thy wife beat thee! Where is Ogyges?
Tell me, or I will leave thee a tatterdemalion.

THE GREEK KALENDS

CARPENTER. Ogyges waits for you, good Euphrasia, Ogyges waits for you; if you will but come where Ogyges is.

EUPHRASIA. Where is he?

CARPENTER. We shall see, anon!

PORPHYRY. Sirrah! will you, for an agreed payment, help carry this old man home?

CARPENTER. No, sir. If I were a porter, which I am not, I earn no wages to-day; the trades are called forth, by their ringleaders.

EUPHRASIA. Ringleaders, forsooth! Some man who knows to write April-fools us all. If I could come at him!

(Exeunt EUPHRASIA and CARPENTER.)

PORPHYRY. Oh, to unpick the world, and rip the seams

That hold the gay clothes of civility
Upon her powdered shoulders!

LIBON. No, no, no, sir, good sir, do not rail. Life is strange weather; and according as from which window we look out, doth it hail, shine, rain, snow, thunder, parch, or give us a good morning. Here another lord and lady draw near.

(Re-enter LYCOPHRON and SAPPHIRA.)

THE GREEK KALENDS

LYCOPHRON. Five times about the compass of this dale,

Five times athwart, and five times up and down,
All to no boot ! Now am I back to thee,
Where, wearied out, thou didst await my range ;
And bootless, and in heat of wrath, am here.

SAPPHIRA. Oh, quit the savage purpose of thy quest ;
For I do read much danger in thy looks,
If thou dost meet thy cousin. It is better,
Believe me, that you meet not, than to meet
In such uncousinly and froward sort.

PORPHYRY. Lycophon, I am loth to stint thy haste ;
But thou art still reported generous,
And of an impulse kind. Gather this man
Who almost scatters, ere his death, his bones ;
Gather him up, all broken as he is,
Upon our shoulders, in some sort or other,
To bear him to the city where he dwells.

LYCOPHRON. Alack, I think he is in evil case.
Go, with this handful of base silver earth,
And hire two clowns to bear him shoulder-high
On poplar poles such as grow plentiful
On every hand. The woods are full of men ;
I think the town hath cast her children out

THE GREEK KALENDS

If thou art for my journey; I am away.

SAPPHIRA. But for this impotent sufferer?

LYCOPHRON. What of him?

Too galled for pity, I am full of gall.

Stephan shall play that he or I shall fall.

(Exeunt LYCOPHRON and SAPPHIRA.)

PORPHYRY. Come; I will bear thee, at the worst,
myself;

Though sorry ease will that be to your bones.

Oh, for a horse-litter!

(Re-enter CYMON.)

Oh, for thy good horse now!

CYMON. Why, Porphyry? Why for my good horse
now?

I, only since we spake, oh, Porphyry,
Am metamorphosed; and most fain would wipe
The past away, even till it had not been;
Which is impossible!

PORPHYRY. That thou art changed
Is proven up to the hilt, even by thy speech.

CYMON. The process, wherefore and my bent of
change—

I speak but of the last. I do believe
Thou art a man kept separate from the herd,
So purified, as with the salt of grace,

THE GREEK KALENDS

From lewd imaginings ; conceive my plight ;
Being such an artist, let thy spirit chasten
The pictures of thy mind. What I have done—
A crime of Fate's own making, not mine own—
Ask not to hear. Only admit me, Master,
Though ever I have lived unkempt and rude,
Disdained good manners, scholarship and love,
To be a least disciple. Porphyry,
What shall I do ? Which is the grander life ;
Under the ragged eaves of larch and pine,
Either a solitary quite devote
To prophesy and fast ; or to support
Twelve god-like labours for my fellows' good,
Unfeed nor thanked ?—Tut, tut !
I do begin most villainous with boasts.
Teach me, for thou art wise and virtuous,
And better skilled than elder sophist far
To chart a blameless, philosophic walk
Dear to the lofty charities.

PORPHYRY. I know not that.
Here's work unto our hands, I know full well.
A little while put aspiration by,
And stooping thy proud neck even as I mine,
Carry with me a burden. I have failed ;
And, in the fiery furnace, cracked and flown ;

THE GREEK KALENDS

Yea, even as a bowl of treacherous glass
That flies in cooling. Let us frame a bed
That's portable, with hasty-woven boughs,
And this poor ship-wrecked mariner of the land
Lay in it, ere he founders ; like a fish
Or triton in no cruel fisher's net ;
And bare him townward to a friendly hearth.

CYMON. With all my heart.

PORPHYRY. With all my heart, so be it.
A plethora of sleek and happy folk,
Both of the better and the baser sort,
Gave this same lucre ; but themselves did shirk,
Either misliking or contemning toil,
The carriage of the burden.

CYMON. More shame to them !
Let not the full paunch take a beggarly text,
To preach on beggary. Hast thou no kin ? (*To LIBON*)

LIBON. 'Faith, sir, all dead.

CYMON. Thou art too old to steal.

LIBON. I have not begged, but still been worth
my bread,
Till in this doating time ; when foolishly,
An old bird caught by chaff, I read this letter ;
And strove to make it good what it did say
Was to fall golden to me.

THE GREEK KALENDS

CYMON. He should make it good
That wrote it. Knit we now a hammock straight
(To PORPHYRY)

In such ingenious and ready wise
As gross Minerva teacheth mother-wit.
And, Libon, put their money in thy poke.
This gentleman and I will bring you home.

LIBON. Is this too fair to last, or to be true?

PORPHYRY. Lord Cymon, take a plain man's plain-
ness well,

For I am for no toys. I too am changed
As wide and oppositely as can be.
Whatever change is thine, oh! I am changed;
And, venerating still the height of art,
Leave it for others' climbing, nobler feet
And calmer heads than mine. Thy readiness
Endears thee to my breast. Oh! In few words,
I think some friendly and good Daimon strikes
Friendship into our souls; mysterious change
Makes unison in thee and me. My speech
Runs somewhat wild.

CYMON. Though it run before mine,
It bears my thought. Plainly we are at one,
Even in our spirits. May the root strike deep
Of this day's friendship, and its top be green

THE GREEK KALENDS

While there is life and power of friendship here.
I wring thy hand. Now to our near affair.
I hear the humming and unstable throng
That makes these seldom-trodden dells be full
Of unexampled hubbub, all to-day,
Gathering towards this spot. Into the brake!
And while this old man rests upon a bank,
Draw knife athwart the green and oozy twigs;
Lop, lop, and fell amain.

PORPHYRY. Good Libon, up;
A step or so.

CYMON. Out of the fevered sun,
Good Libon; yonder is a couch for the nonce.
Porphyry, to-day is commotion in our lives,
The town through, as in our volcanic isle
When there is trouble in the catacombs
As if their denizens moved fearfully
Dreaming of Rhadamanthus. Lend a hand.

(Exeunt Omnes.)

*(Re-enter OYGES, EUPHRASIA, CARPENTER, with the
SERVANT of APOLLOS, CARPENTER'S WIFE, the
MECHANIC CLOWNS, their WIVES, and EROS.)*

OYGES. Goody, goody, leave the ears on my head!

EUPHRASIA. But if I choose to tweak them off?

OYGES. Euphrasia, my honey-pot, my duckling—

THE GREEK KALENDS

EUPHRASIA. My gander !

EROS (*Aside*). Man may be as low as this, and yet be human. For vinegar and gall, it is so, so ; but for rank poison, I must seek further, to fare worse. But these men tickle my fancy.

CARPENTER. Thou hadst better have lived a widower, Ogyges. How thou didst beat thy first wife ! An thou hadst treated her better, she had lived till now. An she fell off thy mule when he had a humour of kicking, thou didst horse-whip her.

EUPHRASIA. I keep his mule, and him, too, in the tracks. But come your ways. Where is the man ye overheard say who penned these blotty sheets of falsehood ? A little would make me swear thou hadst a finger in that pie, Ogyges.

OGYGES. I ? No, not I.

EROS (*Aside*). I will follow about these people, as a peep-show.

CARPENTER. This is the man. What he said, I heard plain ; and what mine ears tell me, I can tell another man. I heard this fellow boast to another, a fellow bondsman, how it was their master Apollos sent about this bag of frothy promises, to make us asses.

SERVANT. Then he left you as he found you.

THE GREEK KALENDS

EUPHRASIA. It were sorrow of his life else. Apollos? We all know him. Let him crack his jests on other backs!

OGYGES. Let him handle his slaves. We be free fellows and deserters, as our deserts shall speak us. You, sir (*To EROS*), that wear your dusty coat so gravely and look on, can you bring us where Apollos is, or bring Apollos where we are? We would lay stripes across his shoulders; otherwise we will lay the stripes upon yours, and send them so him.

EROS. You shew a free hand in giving away to others what you would not have yourselves.

OGYGES. He hath vastly misdemeaned the commonwealth.

CARPENTER. Ay, tell him that!

EUPHRASIA. Or smart for it!

EROS. If it be proved that Apollos hath despatched these missives, it stands him in reason that he hear answers as mirthful. Good fellow creatures, when ye speak in such spiteful indignation, I feel much brotherhood with you. He hath laughed at you, all the forenoon. Now that the sun is on the other side of the hedge, let him laugh o' the wrong side of his mouth. He is by no means far, and by chance may, even now, overhear all we say; and—for a

THE GREEK KALENDS

while longer—laugh us to scorn, after the derisive nature of man. Let that pickle the rod for his own back; for he promised to shew me abominations of human nature, and he has shewn me nothing worse than such baboons as yourselves.

SERVANT. So please you all, grant that my master's high spirits munch the dry hay of your wits—

EROS. To grant so much is to twit him with long ears.

EUPHRASIA. I will warm my hands on thy long ears or thy short ears; and that shortly. (*Lays hands on EROS.*)

SERVANT (*Aside*). Fore-warned is fore-armed. My master shall be both, if I may but warn and arm him.

(*Exit.*)

OGYGES. Shew us Apollos! By Styx and Phlegethon, we will stand upon our indignity! Shall we not, fellow townsmen?

EROS. I will faithfully find you out the fool Apollos, your intellectual better.

WIFE. Use your legs, sir, not your tongue.

EROS. Betray not yourselves by over much cackling. Lie but low in the furze; hither comes the fox to the geese.

(*All hide but EROS.*)

THE GREEK KALENDS

(*Re-enter APOLLOS.*)

APOLLOS. That day is lost that hath no laugh in it. Hail, fellow, well met once more. I but hope, good Eros, thou hast spent as fair a forenoon as I. I have seen long lost friendships found—

EROS. And I have seen new-made hatreds not yet satisfied. Stephan and Lycophron, with the heat of inflammatory hogs, range the woods like madmen.

APOLLOS. But still arrive where the other hath been. When they have walked their legs off, let them home to bed, in better frame of mind.

EROS. Thou, Apollos, art much desired of the mechanic sort.

APOLLOS. And wherefore desired?

EROS. Discover if thou canst. I cannot. Hear them, any man can with ears; but for understanding, they have no such thing among them all.

APOLLOS. I hear them, even now. I will make one in their revels.

EROS (*Aside*). Thou wilt so, too, I think, ere thou be an hour older.

(*OGYGES and his party seize on APOLLOS.*)

APOLLOS. The gods above be the friends of man! What a pother's this?

THE GREEK KALENDS

CARPENTER. Play him ; give him law ; give him a race for his life. Play him, play him. Give him line !

(Exit APOLLOS.)

EUPHRASIA. Rope enough to hang him. Slip ! Now is the fat in the fire ! Braize him, pound him ! To the pestle and mortar with him ! To it, for love o' mercy. Ye are laggards in't ! Slip ! or I will make giblets of ye all !

(Exeunt, crying "Harkaway !" all except EROS.)

EROS. This is the music of the spheres that Jupiter so affects ; but to poor mortal me, I think Hermes' lyre is out of tune. Here come more civilized men and women, not less lunatic. Back, a while, to chronicle their barbarity.

(Re-enter STEPHAN and LYCOPHRON, IRENE and SAPPHIRA.)

IRENE. Ye shall not fight ; ye have no cause to fight.

SAPPHIRA. Oh, wherefore fight ? what cause have ye to fight ?

LYCOPHRON. Two angry men do argue not their cause,
But with unreasoned blows. My sword-arm loose !
Now, stormy cousin.

THE GREEK KALENDS

STEPHAN. Red-hot furnace of a man,
What, am I angry? Anger is thine own ;
I am not angry ; but upon this count,
Bold Lycophron, will call thee to account.

LYCOPHRON. Heartily ; as I would a fielded foe,
I answer.

STEPHAN. And on thy answer will I judgment pass,
Relentlessly as in my court I doomed
A traitor or a murderer to death !
Yea, set thy head up, to admonish men !

LYCOPHRON. Fall, edge ; push, point !

IRENE. Forbear !

SAPPHIRA Beseech you, peace !
I hang, a necklace, here.

IRENE. As fetters, I.

LYCOPHRON. We cannot fight, with women round
our necks.

STEPHAN. Nor clamped upon our wrists. Aspiring
 dame,
Why do you stall me?

IRENE. Because that I aspire.
For shame, for honour, for thy dignity,
Strike not the first blow in this foolish coil.
If he strike thee, thou mayst retaliate ;
But let the ill repute of *first* be his.

THE GREEK KALENDS

LYCOPHRON. I strike thee first. Conceive thyself
as struck,

When not my will, but my encumbrance holds.

SAPPHIRA. O Lycophon, dear Lycophon, sweet
love,

Put not your person's pawn in hazard nice.

LYCOPHRON. Stab him behind, in the dark? Cut
his throat asleep?

Safe vengeance be despised!

IRENE. Stephan, Lord Stephan,

I vext thee with this letter, being vext.

Read, read this letter—for I only tore

Substitute paper. Read, and stanch thy rage.

STEPHAN. Mistress, you mocked at my authority,
Deceiving me. I will not read it now.

No, I am absolute.

LYCOPHRON, Stephan, a word.

Some livelong hours we heat ourselves with search;

And now we find, we are balked with female toils

Which shew much loving but not soldierly.

Rather than miss the hap which just so fit

May not be found again, as in these woods

So solitary, do you now consent,

While that I bind my lady to this tree,

You yours do bind to that. Our belts for thongs—

THE GREEK KALENDS

To trees, or this unlettered monument—
And with a loving roughness, put them from
The dangerous interference of our broil
And our ill blood.

STEPHAN. Bind your spouse, Lycophron ;
It were dishonour to my free-born dame.
Nor think she would disgrace me, to hold back
And couple up in a contemned peace
My hand in actual combat. Bind thy spouse ;
Irene speaketh peace, but acts like war ;
Like war where woman should look proudly on.

SAPPHIRA. You tie me up to torment, torturers ;
And I shall die under it. Irene, save !
Gentle Irene, cut these cruel bonds.

IRENE. Ye shall not bind my sister—shall not, I say,
I looking on !

LYCOPHRON. Curb your wife,
And I will govern mine.

IRENE. Hold them apart.

STEPHAN. Be ruled by me, Irene. At the worst,
Be ruled by my strong arm.

SAPPHIRA. My lord, my lord !

(LYCOPHRON *binds her.*)

IRENE. Oh, thou outrageous monster !

STEPHAN. Lend thy hand,

THE GREEK KALENDS

And these two rose-trees will we so make sure
Against the tumbling wind, that they shall stand
And sun themselves, and blossom beauteously,
Pinned to staid bulks.

(They bind IRENE.)

IRENE. I, sirs, am not a slave !

LYCOPHRON. Now to our sword-play.

STEPHAN. Engage !

(They engage.)

SAPPHIRA. You strike my breast,
Unmanly cousin, every blow you strike,
Where every wound is mine.

IRENE. Words without deeds
Are despicable : since my hands are gagged
That fain would speak in action, I am mute.

SAPPHIRA. What can I say, when I can nothing do ?
What can I do, but weep and nothing say ?
Our eyes, dumb victims, suffer piteously,
That, weeping, see all that they would not see.

IRENE. We are as twain borne living to the tomb,
So powerfully numbed into a trance
We cannot stir to shew we are alive,
Hearing and seeing all. Oh ! Never dream
My love cold, for I am not clamorous.

STEPHAN. My lungs are scarcely breathed.

THE GREEK KALENDS

LYCOPHRON. Prate not, but strike.

STEPHAN. Why, I will prate and strike too. Dost thou jibe?

Hear a true, biting jibe, for once ; and strike !

Creature of Iphigenia's fancy, strike !

Thou lackey of a prodigal princess

Who scorns the silly flies who dance round her,

Disdain, not virtue, keeping her so cold,

She kills her minions even at a glance.

LYCOPHRON. Die thou, among her swarms of insect dead !

Thy wife, for good commodity, doth smile,

While thou play'st moth to Iphigenia's flame,

In hope for some advancement in the state,

Through smiling interest.

IRENE. Slanderous, traitorous serpent !

STEPHAN. Smiling sycophant,
Blasting the bright name of thy patroness !

LYCOPHRON. A blasting wither up thy tongue !

STEPHAN. Her hair-pin should spit thine !

SAPPHIRA. Envenomed Stephan !

IRENE. Gods,
Yield victory to my lord !

SAPPHIRA. Sweet Heracles, come down ;
Part doubtful strife, with certain peace.

THE GREEK KALENDS

(*Re-enter CYMON and PORPHYRY.*)

CYMON. Wound not the tranquil hour.

STEPHAN. Sir, give us place.

Or we will take more ground, and leave you here.

LYCOPHRON. What, shall we hence and fight?

STEPHAN. What else?

CYMON. Be still!

Ye vex the very soul of tolerance,
And wound its breast with your ungentle blows
That, like to hideous lightnings, crash and play
About your brandished guards. Throw down your
glaives;

And the surrendered portals of your ears
Fling open wide, to welcome my assault
Of large reproof. Stand shamefast and rebuked—
Ye do; and it becomes you. In profound peace,
The olive branches green about your blades,
Princes of men, cousins in kinship, more,
Brothers in arms—

LYCOPHRON. Enough of words.

PORPHYRY. Stephan, Lycophron,

I hold it sin, even for daily meat
To take the baser life of bird or beast;
Then how much fouler, rash and impious
The sovran shape of manhood to hew down,

THE GREEK KALENDS

And this god-given and unpriced abode
Of consciousness to desecrate and spoil
In wanton folly.

STEPHAN. Sir Sculptor, carve
Thy quarried stone, forbearing flesh and blood.
Toil in thy trade.

CYMON. War hath his feasts of carnage
I will not grudge. But ye affront the state,
Outrage the kindly tie of family
With sacrilegious bloodshed and annoy
That kick at reason. Fling your swords away
And cower disarmed in the true day of strife,
Or carry them to better purpose.

(*Re-enter* IPHIGENIA *with* HESTA and HEBE.)

Dazzle and swim,
Adamantine senses. Shame, shame, divine shame,
And tender modesty all virginal,
Bar up the fleshly shutters of mine eyes !

IPHIGENIA (*Aside*). Swallow me, Earth! Run
molten like the flood!

Oh, take me down, and hide me bodily;
Suffer this man not look on me again.
He must despise me, if I do not die;
And loath me wholly, if I can forgive!

STEPHAN. Cymon transfigured?

THE GREEK KALENDS

LYCOPHRON. Proud Iphigenia hanging head?

CYMON. Why, what a marvel's here. And every one,

Conceiting of his fellow's doings, gapes.

Yonder divine princess would gladly ask

What holds you in contention ; and myself

See her and all amazed, myself amazed.

Nay, hold your swords as ye were statues yet,

Sculptured in solid wonder. Strife again?

LYCOPHRON.

Our points

Point your way, sir.

CYMON.

The lady pales ;

Have done with this.

STEPHAN.

I am for you as well !

(They both attack CYMON. Sound as of an earthquake.)

CYMON. Well said, Mother Earth !

STEPHAN. Hark, if the just gods do not testify
Against our violence !

LYCOPHRON.

Underground Jupiter

Feigns on us, with this dread diversion,

To unman our front attack. We had best stand
Shoulder to shoulder.

CYMON.

Close up your ranks ;

Not against Dis, against your choleric spite.

This sound is nothing fearsome. Iphigene,

THE GREEK KALENDS

Oh, that it fright not thee ! But thou art brave.
Methinks it was the full vibration
Of the Apollonian chords struck by the quill
Of great Musagetes, and laughed to scorn
Our vaunted melodies we dub divine
For echoing these numbers. To your swords !
What ? is their edge turned by that sphery stop
Of subterranean music ?

STEPHAN. What power so-ever speaks
In these unmeasured accents from the centre,
Whatever god moves thee, thou movest us.
Hast questioned with the dead ? Two passions ours,
Amazement, first, for thee, shame for ourselves.
Cousin, your hand. I will be straitly bound
In heavy sureties to do no more harm.

LYCOPHRON. Cousin, I am of that mind, every whit.

CYMON. Now are ye men, not manslaughterers that grave
Abhorred epitaphs of lasting shame
On one another's brows. What sport is here ?
Why are your ladies bound ? Oh, why ? But why
I am not curious. Let the story go ;
And anger go along—bear with my speech,
Chaste lady—
Porphyry, Stephan, and thou, Lycophron,
I am a black sheep in yon lady's eyes

THE GREEK KALENDS

That veil themselves under their own sad lids
Helped with close drapery, and deny to shine,
While I infect this presence. Porphyry,
I'll hastily to Libon and his need,
Need imminent and strait, yet mine as strait,
Imminent and exacting. Swiftly kneel,
Kneel on your knees, Stephan and Lycophron,
And absolutely yield controlment up
Of your hereafter lives to live or die,
To die or live—for else I will repay
Your mutual outrage with its merit, death—
Yield up, to her with the averted eyes;
And say I am become oblivion;
That never I, henceforth, with baleful brow
Affront her, being even visible.
When she is hence, come, Porphyry, to me;
And when the friendly night that's good to thieves
And weary eyes, hath mantled earth and sky,
By any bridle-path or track of goat
Or of those, shaggy and unkempt, who watch
Their unkempt herds, we will convey ourselves,
With inoffensive footsteps, to our homes.
But yield yourselves to mercy, ye rash twain.

(Exit CYMON.)

EROS *(Aside)*. Now are they all out of breath, and

THE GREEK KALENDS

'tis time for *Chorus* to speak his mind and call them all cyphers.

IPHIGENIA. And is he parted hence? O mufflers thick,

Be as a blindness round me, while he stays,
While yet he stays. But tell me, shepherd kings,
Or what ye be—but each face here I know—
I am confounded; great bewilderment
Floweth above my head, and in mine ears
Maketh a wondrous babbling.

PORPHYRY. Lady, I am
A herald and a gaoler. These two cousins,
If thine amazement may give room to thought,
Call thee to judgment.

LYCOPHON. Humbly.

STEPHAN. We do.

EROS (*Aside*). They have destroyed a good fight amongst them; that had else, perhaps, destroyed two most sorry slips of mortality.

IPHIGENIA. Judge? But how, when and why? I am all a-loss.

STEPHAN. And we. Here, Cymon, rated still a clown
Ungainly and in courtesy uncouth,
Learning, I know not how, controlling mood,

THE GREEK KALENDS

And finding us in such an heady broil
As to speak of—then how much more to act?—
Is our much shame, reproves us ; and at once,
Just as the rain beats the high billows down,
Or as the grampus or the northern whale
Whereof our Argonauts have made us know
Doth smooth the water with great pools of oil
Flowing and floating from his slippery back
When he disports him in his element,
Cymon—approved with thunder, as you heard—
So glibly brought us, even while we strove,
To better knowledge of our honour, that
Our swords, ashamed at their own nakedness,
Conceal themselves, and we, by his command,
Wait lowly, who now parting hence bequeathed,
Even in the strange words of a dying man
Upon his mortal bed of suffering—
For so it seemed—his power over ourselves,
A legacy to thee ; and so departs.
Thou sawest this, and knowest all as we ;
His meaning mocks our search.

IPHIGENIA. I am much concerned.
And, Porphyry, thou gentle graver, say—
No, nothing say. Well, what have I with you ?
But first,

THE GREEK KALENDS

What do these ladies at their moorings, chafed
By wind and tide which pull uneasily
At their taut cables? Gentle dames, wherefore,
Wherefore is this rude binding of your limbs?
Here are your husbands! Hesta and Hebe,
Loose these brave galleys. Oh, cast off! Set sail!
Now the world reels, and most unlikely haps
Make these old woods enchanted. Wherefore, sirs?
Who bound these noble sisters?

LYCOPHRON. We did, madam.

IPHIGENIA. Shame upon shame!

But all is shame ; the very air doth burn,
As if the hot wind blew. Nothing but shame !
Dear ladies, stand around me.

(IRENE and SAPPHIRA are unbound by HESTA and HEBE.)

IRENE. With a good will.

SAPPHIRA. What hath disorder'd thee?

For, by the just gods, I will take mine oath
Worse hath befallen thee, thy spirit more
To fret, than our loathed bonds; bonds which, I
swear,

Were no delightful bracelets clasped in sport,
And worn for ornament. What is amiss?

IPHIGENIA. What is amiss? Oh, I lack sleep and
rest

THE GREEK KALENDS

And thought and quiet and a world of things ;
Oh, I lack song, music and poesy,
And sober reason and good counsel most.
Enough of that. You, combatants, give ear.
You are surrendered here by Porphyry,
Good man and true ; and own yourselves to have
fought

In petty malice and ill-governed spleen.
There I acquit you ; men and beasts will so.
Furthermore, on your own confession,
You are convicted both that you tied up
Your wives, as faggots with a twisted withe,
As husbandmen bind sheaves of sickled wheat ;
Whereof they bear the red and barbarous wheals
Upon their snowy whiteness. For the which
I will resolve on some ingenious
And suitable dishonour for you both.
No, do not plead for them. I know ye'll say,
Irene and Sapphira, ye will say
Their shame your shame. But I will so contrive
Their shame shall be your honour. Stephan, Lyco-
phron,

First, as I am acknowledged chieftainess
And queen of our nobility, but most
Because I look upon your wraths with eyes

THE GREEK KALENDS

Of nothing-kindled wrath, yield and obey.

(*Re-enter SERVANT of APOLLOS.*)

Shelter me, matrons, maidens ! False alarum !

Thou art not he. Speak on ; what wilt ? I hear.

SERVANT. Where is Apollos ? Felt not my lady the earthquake here ?

IPHIGENIA. Else were I nerveless.

SERVANT. Madam, I am now escaped out of the hands of the people. Where is Apollos, my master ? They are of set purpose to do him evil. I must warn him to keep from their path.

IPHIGENIA. Where is Apollos ? I know not. How hath he angered them ?

SERVANT. There I am ignorant. Hath any here seen Apollos, I pray ?

OMNES. No, sure ; none.

SERVANT. Jests come home to roost, no less than curses. They who sow the wind, reap the whirlwind.

(*Exit.*)

IPHIGENIA. How the man frightened me, springing
as 'twere
Out of the ground.

HESTA *and* HEBE. O princess—

IPHIGENIA. But to your penalties,
You honourable, yet dishonoured lords.

THE GREEK KALENDS

What Iphigenia bids, hear and fulfil.
Find, for your fretful virtue and your strength,
Sufficing labour in the good of man ;
Drain marshes, pave our highways, bury the dead ;
And when your brawny limbs are fain of strife,
Wound beasts of ravage ; pierce the living rock
With living leats, and march across champaigns
With crystal-bearing, giant aqueducts. .

LYCOPHRON. There is a poor decrepit hind
hard by
Besought me, and I would not.

STEPHAN. So fared it every way
With me. As I bethink me, Porphyry,
You led the man.

PORPHYRY. I did: Iphigenia,
Waft gentle aid unto this frail old man
Whereof they speak—this very frail old man
As thin as any withered leaf drawn up
Into itself : and you will be repaid
In benediction, all his humble store.
This child the gods love little and let live
Will from his noble lips—for noble he is,
Nor haughty nor abashed—make audible,
Unto the wise and ever-listening Fates,
Strong benedictions intercessory.

THE GREEK KALENDS

IPHIGENIA. To this go forth. And never greet
your wives,
Till, with re-union of vows, I say
Wed them anew. The good deed first to hand
Be first in hand.

*(Exeunt PORPHYRY, STEPHAN and LYCOPHRON, followed
by EROS.)*

They shall be banished men
Out of the circles of your loving arms,
Till their reformed spirit warrant sure
Against relapse.

SAPPHIRA. Lady, whose bosom moves
With unexpressed but most real pain
We cannot guess at, take, awhile, the place
Of these poor exiles; let our arms immure,
Like brazen armour, thee, here where thou art.
And so close having taken her and me,
Allow a counterclaim, against the fine
And forfeit you adjudge.

IPHIGENIA. By all the gods,
Yea, by the goddesses as well, I swear
Your feminine embracements much I love,
And relish your dear kindness. It is true,
Most true it is the tempest of this pulse
A tyrannous high wind hath made to beat

THE GREEK KALENDS

In the ocean of my being. Gentle dames,
Be locked, as ever should Pandora's box,
The wherefore of my passion.

IRENE. May the calm gods on high
Grant thee their solace, noble maiden. Yet
Grant me the solace of my husband home,
Whose absence were discredit, and the stuff
That slander spins so fine. Restore our lords.
Sith I can see, by their dejected mien,
Our lords acknowledge thee as paramount,
And on thy errands run, grant us our lords.

SAPPHIRA. Oh, give me mine, oh, give me mine,
pure maid!

IRENE. Nay, I myself, most for imperious will,
To feel my power, inflamed my noble mate
To this irruption; for we all were fired
By letters written unto us.

IPHIGENIA. Oh, these odd scaps of paper;
They bear much blame among them! Thou, Irene,
Hadst best, in widow manner, wear thy hair
Cropt at the ears—as we in mourning use—
To learn humility. Nay! cut it short.
What, weeping for thy tresses? Thou, Sapphira,
Not uncomplaining thy long sufferance,
But ever yielding; this will gall, and tempt

THE GREEK KALENDS

A husband's mutiny. I will set up
A better menage; then remit his doom.
Trust me, I pray. Irene, trust thou shalt.

IRENE. Noble princess—

SAPPHIRA. Noble and sweet princess—

IPHIGENIA. Mine to prolong this sentence, or curtail.

IRENE. What if we be importunate?

SAPPHIRA. What if we lie

Lowly as worms upon thy marble steps,
The livelong hours or years?

IRENE. What if we rail?

IPHIGENIA. Ye will not be so foolish.

SAPPHIRA. What if we console

Thee who our consolation pluckest off?

IPHIGENIA. Oh, fret me not to-day. Was that a
step?

I am burning touchwood. Fall, ye quenching dews!
Fall, clouds! and, friendly trailing vapours, cling
About my blushful neck!

IRENE. What meaneth she!

IPHIGENIA. Now, by the great gods, peace! O
maids, my maids,

Give me an oath, to swear I am distract.

HESTA. What oath best serves? Hear some to
choose from; mark;

THE GREEK KALENDS

First by the scaly warden that doth keep
The Hesperian garden, isled upon the deep ;
Then by the boss upon Minerva's shield,
By Jove's own bolts that maiden Sage doth wield ;
Or by the angry looks and fateful ban
That surprised Dian shot against the man
That, witless, spied on her divinity ;
By all the Powers that arm virginity——

HEBE. Nay, by the apples of the breast and eyes
Of the dear Cypriot goddess not too wise——

IPHIGENIA. Peace ! By the spotless honour of a
maid,
Cymon is brutal ; I more brute than brute ;
Unless I hate him.

IRENE. Hate, brute and hate ?

HESTA. Cymon hath frightened her unwittingly.

(*To IRENE.*)

Though both be innocent, I greatly fear—
So much his near approach dashed her but now—
She runs mad an she meet him.

IPHIGENIA. A footfall sure !

IRENE. She hath well entreated us, setting us free ;
Would we could mend her woe.

SAPPHIRA. What passion's hers ? (*To HEBE.*)

HEBE. The princely Cymon, too incautiously,

THE GREEK KALENDS

But without harm's intent, hath scared her peace.
If he come near, she presently doth fly
Out of her wits indeed.

SAPPHIRA. Can we not mend it ?

IPHIGENIA. Maidens, my maidens, every broken
twig

That cracketh under every timid foot
Of woodland creature—I am so distraught—
Bringeth my heart into my mouth. I dread
To hear the grass grow, almost, or ants creep ;
My shadow, lest it pry into my thoughts
Which know no crime, but yet are conscience-struck,
Cowering within the bed-chamber of dreams ;
And I am like a city by the sea,
Whose broken wall, thrown down, doth leave her bare
Unto sea-rovers whose feared sails are shaped
By tired eyes where they are not. Scorn me not ;
Unto me, overwrought, let me invoke
The gentle ministry of song ; alack,
Alack, that I should lack more governance,
More dignity ! What's that ? I something heard.
Let me have music. I am feverish.
Across the distant hills, the throbbing air
Is sick with mid-day heat, and the grey midge,
Far smaller than the gnat, dances in clouds ;

THE GREEK KALENDS

Now dank and mossy coverts fair entice,
Where crags drip-drop upon the hart's-tongue fern,
Where the low brows of caves are slumberous.
Fain would I sleep, yet fear to close mine eyes.
But keep good watch ! And, Hebe, wilt thou sing.

SAPPHIRA. Tune, tune thy voice to her attentive
ear.

Fill it with sweetness, lest it cram its hunger
With nightmare fancies ; very softly pour
Bewitching chords on discord.

HEBE (*Sings*).

Come to us and bring delight ;
We are weary all alone,
Every day and every night
Wooed but by the salt sea moan.
Mariner so blithe of blee,
Ah, come to me !

Are we mermaids deathly pale ?
Hopeless yearning makes us so.
Come to us, and we are hale ;
Come, and all our care will go.
Mariner so blithe of blee,
Ah, come to me !

Love can make full sick the heart ;
Love again can give it health.

THE GREEK KALENDS

We and ye are poor apart ;
Come ; and both have golden wealth.
Mariner so blithe of blee,
Ah, come to me !

Seamen, strain no more the oar ;
Furl your windy sail and rest ;
Prove, upon this lonely shore,
Love alone makes lover blest.
Mariner so blithe of blee,
Ah, come to me !

Here the shining sands are wet,
Here the shining sands are dry.
Take the fisher in his net,
While go free the silly fry.
Mariner so blithe of blee,
Ah, come to me !

IPHIGENIA. A footstep on the path !
Oh, treacherous music, under whose safeguard
Our hated foe stealeth on our delight,
And takes us prisoners ! Dark midnight shades,
Teach me to be invisible ! O ye fogs
That are accursed in our seaport towns,
Come up and hide me, and, for chidings harsh,
I'll give you thanks and blessing.

IRENE. Take good sanctuary,
Here in the brushwood. Something of your need

THE GREEK KALENDS

We are made to know. Oh, hide here, all as safe
As Daphne in her green and laureate tree,
Though thy pure skin not gnarled to bitter bark,
Nor blood congealed to greenish sap.

IPHIGENIA. My pride

I fed with brave display of raiment ; now
I covet nothing more than secrecy ! (*Hides.*)

SAPPHIRA. Clothe upon her with shadowy growth,
dark leaves.

I would much, for her sake.

IRENE. It is but due.

But friendship oft looks like conspiring hate ;
And so let ours ; let us devise it so
That Cymon make his peace, before they part.

HEBE (*Sings*).

Back again, I say,
To-morrow or some other day ;
When the sky that now is blue,
With white clouds so small and few,
Hath put on grey.

In no summer prime,
Take thy answer for all time.
When December wind doth blow,
Or in January snow,
Then turn thy rime.

THE GREEK KALENDS

Joy enjoys the tax
Levied upon poor men's backs ;
 Joy is full, and wants no more ;
 Sadness watcheth at the door
For all she lacks.

When thou seest her stand,
Nothing in her either hand,
 Is it worth thy while to take,
 Empty, her who bade thee ache,
And smiled so bland ?

*(Re-enter CYMON and PORPHYRY, with EROS ; LIBON
carried in a litter by STEPHAN and LYCOPHRON.)*

CYMON. What song is toward ? What make ye,
vocal nymphs ?

The supreme lamp is vanished from the sky,
My moon is set ; O ye, her court of stars,
Ye are grateful to my eyes because I walk
Safely by starlight. These new-humbled lords,
Bearing their burden of relieved pain
Unto her royal sovran beams, are rich
And fortunate to find so good a means
To bring their prayers up to her haughty feet ;
While I have no fair right to fling me there.
Yet, brethren, in whatever noble act
Ye next elect to please pure Iphigene,

THE GREEK KALENDS

Make me your partner.

LYCOPHRON. In honour bound.

STEPHAN. Duteously. Stand back! (*To IRENE.*)

LYCOPHRON (*To SAPPHIRA*). Stand back!

We neither of us may come near you, wives.

PORPHYRY. Make on, at once.

Charity's progress should be like a king's,

Solemn and with interminable state,

As the unretarded circle of the orbs,

Without a hindrance to its pageantry.

Slow and sure, march on.

CYMON. I marshal you; slow march.

EROS (*Aside*). Nothing slower than charity; nor surer to be behindhand.

HESTA. My lord Cymon, these ladies pray a word with you.

CYMON. I am at their service. I will catch you up; A moment's word here. What would you, fair ones?
(*Exit PORPHYRY, with LIBON borne by STEPHAN and*

LYCOPHRON.)

IRENE. Somewhat we know; somewhat and more we guess.

Lord Cymon hath sent suppliants a-foot
For their atonement, while he hangs aloof,
Too fearful of his fate. I am thy friend,

THE GREEK KALENDS

Unless the cave were tell-tale of my voice.

SAPPHIRA. I warrant you, you can speak feelingly.
Nature is art in this ; you are a man,
A shapely man ; and, in a woman's ear,
Fair sight corrects ill hearing. Noble sir,
Rehearse harangues all night to stocks and stones ;
Begin with lifeless crags. When they give back—
As needs they will—responsive echoes, choose
That flower of golden eye and silver wheel
Escalloped round the edge, rayed like a star,
The flower that typifieth maidenhood ;
Or no, in these same woods begin thy task ;
This tree that grows out of this mouldering tomb
Rank with the dew of centuries, will serve.
Make pure outpouring of thy fervent soul,
Melodious as voice most certain is
When it rings true. Oh, let thy golden thought
In golden coinage mint itself, and roll
Seductively with all allurements chaste,
Into the leafy lap of this coy dell,
Until the birds, thy captives overhead
That fill the trees with ears, in unison
Taking thy part, hold tuneful grove and glade
In convinced rapture.

IRENE.

Wisely urged,

THE GREEK KALENDS

Under fantastic guise. We leave you now ;
And trust, as soon as we have turned our backs,
There will be eloquence wasted on wood,
Till lyres shall be especially contrived
Out of this grain for ever. To thy hest.
Quit not this spot for half a century,
Neither for food nor sleep. This very tree,
This very tree, doubtless 'tis Iphigene.
Storm it as Iphigene ; 'tis Iphigene.

IPHIGENIA. Merciless women, will they bate me
here ?

Dare they allow it ? Oh, retreat is none ! (*Aside.*)

IRENE. Thunder upon its ears with potent noise ;
And in the extreme, threaten it with the axe ;
Teach it to feel how weak is woman set
Against the force of man.

SAPPHIRA. Dare not be rude ;
For love is won by courtesy, not arms ;
Supplicate ; stand a dozen yards away ;
Be not denied ; but if denied, then die.

IRENE. Accept dismissal, as being over-ruled ;
But bear thee proudly even in defeat ;
So shalt come off with honour.

SAPPHIRA. Should you weep,
Oh, women dread men's tears.

THE GREEK KALENDS

IRENE. At the very worst—
I have known men and women—take my word—
Scatter its greenery ; make wreck of that
Which maketh wreck of thee. This women love.

SAPPHIRA. Some women love. I rather bid thee
think
To win in wrath is but to marry hate.
Farewell, and prosper.

CYMON. Fate grant I may.
(*Exeunt* IRENE and SAPPHIRA.)

HESTA. One word, from me.
Woo in a different mood for every tree.

HEBE. Try different moods ; but one love constantly.

EROS (*Aloud*). Men I detest ; but women !

HESTA. And we detest you !

EROS. 'Tis a mutual friendship. I will list after
our *vox dei*.

(*Exit at one side, and exeunt* HESTA and HEBE *at the other.*)

CYMON. Say, is it foolishness, or is it wise,
That I will do this thing ? Do it I will.
Pent passion, find freedom in utterance.
Oh, now imagination gives me words
Who was so silent, boorish and so dumb,
In torpor and by choice. I shall prevail,

THE GREEK KALENDS

Or I deceive myself ;—as many are bold
On paper, shortly dashed, when face to face.
I am not face to face. A block of wood
Receives my groans. Whether that's well or ill,
I know not.

IPHIGENIA. I know not.

CYMON. I could think the branches spoke ;
So wrapt am I in phantasy. But, on !
Kneel, Cymon, kneel ? Lift up thy voice, and speak.
Goddess, for I shall never deem thee clay,
Or if thou be, thou makest clay divine
And the material whence gods are framed—
Nay, this will never move. Help, simple terms ;
Help, coy Ionian tongue I have not used
Except to grate on thee. Enthroned Princess,
I clasp thy mantle ; hear, for charity,
How foul an act, how very foul a sin,
If wantonly I dared peruse thy limbs
How wrongfully—may, from bad to worse ;
A dialect to paint a feigned love,
That flatters him that speaks. I will be plain
As ever I was. Lady, you see me here
With contrite heart—Oh, but the leaves do stir !
Methinks a holy spirit moves the leaves
Unto attention. Laurel, turn thine ear,

THE GREEK KALENDS

And I will justify, more than confess
How, with what awful worship, I did gaze—
And yet I wounded. That is unpardonable.

IPHIGENIA. No!

CYMON. Oh, I will sere the eyes out of my head,
Since they have seen so much more than they ought!
And do it gladly to wipe out thy shame.

IPHIGENIA. Do not.

CYMON. No? Cymon, laugh; for thou art credulous
To think the tree did speak. I prosper, sure,
In this exordium; but imagine here,
O thou vain, foolish, self-sufficient man,
Instead of paper-thin and fluttering green,
Only substantial unto the eye,
Imagine an incarnate Fury risen
With Hecate in her looks, Medusa's beauty
Striking thee out of life, dead as the bole
On which thou wast'st thy cunning.

IPHIGENIA. Cymon, Cymon,
Medusa was a woman; and I think
She was most tearful for the snakes in her hair,
And that men died ere loved her.

CYMON. What wouldst thou say
If Iphigene, wronged lovely Iphigene,
Turned on thee with those piteous-pleading eyes,

THE GREEK KALENDS

Those weeping eyes, where the unshed tear did stand,
Indignant eyes that prayed thee to be gone
With more command in them than ever filled
The tone of clarions? Oh, she can be
Imperious and afraid.

IPHIGENIA. Why, I can, too.

Wilt thou not hear me, brawling, boisterous wind
That stirs each twig, like to Æolian strings?

CYMON. Surely the boughs have language. I will
 plead,

Answer, cross-question, answer back again
To what I think I hear. High Iphigene—

IPHIGENIA. What sport to be in armour of green
 leaves!

CYMON. High Iphigene!

IPHIGENIA. Lowly Cymon!

Thou art almost forgiven—

CYMON. Blessed boughs,
I'll clasp thee!

IPHIGENIA. But not quite!

CYMON. Too rash again.

I will not question how this thing may be,
But take it, being so. Why, why *not quite*?

Either I sinned, or I am innocent.

If thou dost know my soul, thou know'st me pure.

THE GREEK KALENDS

IPHIGENIA. But no one knows thy soul, and least
the bride,

When thou shalt change her home.

CYMON. Who spake of brides?

I would not wed but her; and, on my life,
She will not be won over; her disdain,
Deeming me foully curious and unclean,
Smothers me. Oh, had I but half an hour
To plead my cause, or were she eavesdropper
Even to this very scene—No, no! Ah, no!
Thou art a goddess, or my phantasy,
Echo, or anything that may be strange,
But not a woman.

IPHIGENIA. Iphigene is a woman;
And much more woman than Medusa was.
If only Iphigene were safely clad
Even in the darkness of this foliage,
So that her blushes should be as obscure
As the poor goose-girl is who lives and dies
Unmemorized at all; if her quick blood
Told no one but her heart how fast it ran,
Hearing its faults confessed, then Iphigene
Perhaps might say——

CYMON. What might she say perhaps?

IPHIGENIA. Why, anything that came into her head.

THE GREEK KALENDS

Why, anything to pass the time away.

CYMON. I do believe it. But—Is there nothing more?

IPHIGENIA. Oh, twenty chapters and a half, at least!

But thou provest idle.

CYMON. No! What would Iphigene say?

IPHIGENIA. What would she think? Which is more secret far

Than the most secret language of the dead
Breathed underground between two neighbour graves.

CYMON. What would her right hand whisper to her left?

Her ear unto her ear? Her eye to eye?

IPHIGENIA. Nay, an her eyes squint inward!

CYMON. Profane boughs,

I'll hack thy branches!

IPHIGENIA. Oh!

CYMON. A hand, a hand?

I never dreamed a dryad might be felt;
Thought her a thing of faith. We'll talk less near.
No, thou art too much like to Iphigene,
If thou art shapely, being of female form.
No, wood-nymph!

IPHIGENIA. By my soul, I love thee, swain—

THE GREEK KALENDS

I wish thee well, I mean. Give me thy ring;
Slip it upon my finger. If thou love,
If thou dost truly worship Iphigene,
Send me, thy herald. This same ring of thine
Shall be my token that she credit me:
For I am very inward in her love;
I know this instant where she may be found.
Believe me, there are not two gentlewomen
More truly knit to one another's souls.

CYMON. And wilt thou plead my cause?

IPHIGENIA. Thou wouldst fare ill else.

My hate, believe me, would much prejudice,
And my good favour—oh, but friendship vaunts.
Pledge troth to me as her proxy. (*Comes from hiding.*)

CYMON. Iphigene, Iphigene!

IPHIGENIA. Then, forester, you know me who I am;
A vain princess who set her heart on silks,
And spent her purse upon embroideries.
I have no boast to make; and modesty
Leaveth me bound, imprisoned and ashamed,
Left like Andromeda for dragon's food
Of Perseus' loosing. Tell me what my fate.
But Iphigene hath heard thy uttered soul,
And soul to soul shall render like account.
Noble intruder, please to think all said

THE GREEK KALENDS

That woman ought to say to grant her love ;
All bounty shewn, and all reserve as well.
More I will not, and all that much I will.
A word unspoken is a dart in hand,
That late I shook on thy defenceless head,
But spoken, arms the foe. Turn it on my breast,
And, if thou wilt, make havoc, for thou canst.
The speech is uttered ; Cymon, Cymon, Cymon,
Be not too cruel, leave my evergreens,
Leave me my bays. I draw them athwart again.

CYMON. O gracious ears,
I pray you, do not trust report of me.
Cymon is dead ! Now long live he anew !

(A shouting within.)

IPHIGENIA. Oh, leave the branches round me !
(Shouting continued, nearer.)

CYMON. Yes, with haste.
There is invasion rolling toward this plot
And corner of the unparked forest. Fire,
Fire in dry branches comes not swifter on.
I would make love, but for this noisy rout.
What, are these outlaws whose unruly lives
Outrage the hospitality of the woods ?
These are our citizens ! Oh, shame on law !
And that Apollos that they hale away.

THE GREEK KALENDS

By Heracles, Apollos haled in bonds?

Annoy on joy, and serpent-hiss on bliss.

IPHIGENIA. I am afraid there is mischief.

CYMON.

I will hear it.

And, by my father's ghost, turn it away!

IPHIGENIA. What can be done?

CYMON. Hide, darling, only hide.

I'll hear this cause. What I may do, I will,

To right the wrong, and fashion well of ill.

(*Re-enter OGYGES and EUPHRASIA, CARPENTER and his WIFE, and the rest, dragging in APOLLOS. After them, EROS. CYMON and IPHIGENIA hide.*)

EUPHRASIA. Aha, Apollos! He promised us fatness; and we come on all fours in an earthquake. Pin him, ye lubberly clouts.

APOLLOS. I can easier roll like a wood-louse, than run like a spider.

EUPHRASIA. Hair by hair, pluck out his beard. Beat me his brains to a frisked egg. Swing him by his knave's heels for a sign at his own door.

OGYGES. Though he be not a lawyer, he can set his name to a bond; and that is worse; an honest man's word is his bond.

EUPHRASIA. Bite your tongue out, and let none hear what a fool I have married.

THE GREEK KALENDS

CARPENTER. This man and his man have gulled us all shamefully. We look for redress.

WIFE. Ay; or fulfilment of his lies.

OGYGES. But by this titanic earthquake do we hop like parched peas on a shovel.

APOLLOS. Why then, our nurse hath shaken us, as froward children; let us look to it, lest she take the rope-end.

CARPENTER. The rope-end for thee!

EUPHRASIA. Ay, and a noose at the end of that!

APOLLOS. Marriage?

EUPHRASIA. Ay, to the gallows!

CARPENTER. All our city's leaders shall die. And thou art one of them.

APOLLOS. Then must thou die incontinently after; and follow thy leader.

OGYGES. We have forsworn base following; and are rational brutes.

APOLLOS. Go to; the ants and bees were rational once, and lived in savage singleness, every hand—or foot—against his neighbour's; till commodity taught courtesies, and long habit begot intuitive virtue. Then will ye think thoughts to stir the State's puddled stagnation to individual motive? There was a man

THE GREEK KALENDS

once fought right hand against left, till he sliced himself asunder ; and all the king's horses and all the king's men could not fit him together again. Be admonished ; the two halves of that man stand each on one leg like a stork, and fight to this day.

EUPHRASIA. Have at him, beat him, stone him, pelt him !

WIFE. And we will too ! A rat's pension on him, vermin ; hanging ? hanging is too good for him !

APOLLOS. Fie, ingratitude ! Must I fulfil my promises, or ye will promise me a ferry over to the fields of Elysium ? Ingratitude *in excelsis* ! Look ye, friends, did not my promises and undertakings warm your cold hearts ? And now, ingrates that ye are, for that I will not do more ; and, on the top of warming, fry your hearts alive with joy of performance, ye will revoke your already-paid love ; and miscall me defaulter till I forfeit life itself. Is this fair, fair co-heirs of fancies ? O ye omnivorous gastronomers of hear-say, believe me, it were better for your livers if ye bade me tell you a good story.

CARPENTER. Down with him ! He would fool us all, by playing the fool. Down with him !

APOLLOS. Would that ye found your own folly as

THE GREEK KALENDS

easy to be laughed at, as other people's ! What, men alive, think him a poor fool that cannot laugh hugely at himself.

EUPHRASIA. Thou waddling decoy duck, why hast thou led us by the nose ? Answer that ! Why hast thou done this, pumpkin ?

EROS (*To APOLLOS*). All thy letters have missed their mark ; men who came for this have found the other.

APOLLOS. The unexpected happens, and shall, as heretofore ; men in armour shall die of a flea-bite, and the securest leaden gravity be tickled with the lightest feather.

EROS. Well said.

APOLLOS. Ay.

EROS. Ill done.

APOLLOS. Fall down and worship the god of laughter for me. I cannot laugh quite as well as I am wont ; these fellows look so sad and savage.

EROS. Oh, that ye had a common neck, that I might chop it through !

APOLLOS. This monster is Hydra ; for every head cut off two sprang up in its place.

CARPENTER. Master Eros, I shall warrant, was intercessory before the fact.

THE GREEK KALENDS

EROS. I will sup here with a long spoon.

(Exit.)

APOLLOS. He that hath no heart, hath legs.

OGYGES. Hale we Apollos to the top of yon cliff;
and let him fly down.

APOLLOS. Any fool can do that! Let me climb
to the bottom, and I will fly up.

OGYGES. And we will; for all men shall begin at
the bottom of the ladder!

EUPHRASIA. Hold thy fool's tongue, Ogyges. Have
I not said? Cease babbling, all. Let your ragged
staves to it and do it. Fall to! Mend and mar! Fall
to; right and left, hand and foot, tooth and nail!

(ALL cry the like.)

CYMON *(Discovering himself)*. Peace, madmen, and
ye women void of shame!

I did not think our city gave its roofs
To such unkingly and dishonoured folk
As ye approve yourselves. Are ye not free?
But I shall shortly call you drunken slaves,
Which I am loth to do.

EUPHRASIA. Mend thy own boots, thou; I know
thee. What a clatter keep'st! He would drink with
a ploughboy and rub shoulders with a gaol bird; and
now he calls us ill names. Let him hang! To it, to

THE GREEK KALENDS

it ! Tear Apollos ; ribroast Apollos, hang, draw and quarter him !

(*ALL cry the like.*)

CYMON. I jump at why ye are enraged so.
We all are game shot by this guilty man
Whose utmost fault is that he makes his jest—
If all these quips are his, as now I see—
Out of our fickleness and wasted time.
And what is mirth to him is more to us ;
For by his jesting do we know ourselves,
And smart to our own bettering.

EUPHRASIA. Let him smart to his bettering too,
say we.

Let him have it piping hot.

(*Shouts from ALL.*)

CYMON. Then at the worst, hear ! I have nothing
spared
To humble notable proud men to-day
Beneath my frown, having first duly frowned
Upon myself in scorn of what I was
When, as you say, I drank with brainless hinds
And unhang'd thieves ; there is a little now
Of judge in me ; and I adjudge ye do
A murderous outrage. Here I set my back
Against this tree. Apollos, pinioned fast,

THE GREEK KALENDS

Becomes your shame if you do strike a man
Defenceless and in bonds. The knotty cords—
Sith I too well perceive they are no charm
Against your foul ungenerous violence—
I sever and throw off. Here stand we up,
Two to two thousand, to defend our lives,
Or in contemned battle lose them here,
If ye must bay us, as a pack of hounds.

EUPHRASIA. Out on him! Let him die. Strike,
neighbours. As for Apollos, pare his nails, mince
him small; mince him, mince him, mince him.

(*ALL shout.*)

IPHIGENIA (*Discovering herself*). Strike shame into
your souls! Lift not a hand.
How very foolish in its wickedness,
When that your children come to tell the tale
Unto their children, will this work appear.
Fie, fie, your kindly faces are defaced
And drawn into a shape of ugly wrath,
Even as the good face of a little child
Is puckered in its anger.

EUPHRASIA. Pucker your own face, you shall have
cause!

Chop them all to collops! Mangle them together!

(*ALL shout.*)

THE GREEK KALENDS

CYMON. Alas, heroic girl ; alas, thou too ?
And must we in their Saturnalia down ?
So be it ; yet, alas, and bitter shame
Fouler than shame, to die by dirty hands
Of men whose trade it is to kill our beasts !

EUPHRASIA. Hammer and tongs ! Shoot them all
to death with cobble stones ! Fling flints in slings !

(*ALL shout.*)

APOLLOS. Could I tickle a smile among them,
they were not dangerous.

EUPHRASIA. A hedge-stake tickle ye !
(*ALL shout. Then a great noise as of an earthquake, far
louder than before.*)

CYMON. What roar was that ? It hath appalled
the air ;
And awed a reverence in these brutish breasts,
As if a god descended.

WIFE. We had best think them gods indeed, ere
we touch them ; they make the earth tremble when
they please.

CARPENTER. This is far louder than the last. We
had best bethink us.

(*Re-enter SERVANT of APOLLOS.*)

SERVANT. What, my master in your hands ? How
the earth shook itself, as if a wet retriever !

THE GREEK KALENDS

(*Re-enter PORPHYRY.*)

OGYGES. What equerries from Erebus are here?

PORPHYRY. Oh, for convincement of the Orphic lyre

To procreate belief! Ye heard a rumble.

It was our world blown like a cloudy sky

When the untrammeled wind doth hurtle on

Cloud over cloud, and no shape permanent,

But like a dream. At last the guttered trough

Yawned, till I looked my fill down an abysm

Of unexplored fear; whereat my brain

Grew giddy and irrational.

OGYGES. Believe this! By Demogorgon, no!

APOLLOS. Methinketh Typhon, like a pastry-cook,
Puts barm into this dough (*Striking earth*) to make
it light,

So that it rise and work.

CARPENTER. Tish, tish, all lies.

PORPHYRY. A carrier bird, I scud
Before my flock that, after, flaps amain.

(*Re-enter STEPHAN and LYCOPHRON with LIBON.*)

IPHIGENIA. Speak, Lycophron.

LYCOPHRON. Help! Succour! Yet there is no
help in man,
And little in the gods. Help, help, oh, help!

THE GREEK KALENDS

I see a whirlpool of the steady earth ;
So that, as seas, dry land runs mountains high,
Till palaces, in mortal shipwreck, roll
On their beam-ends, while cottages go down
Like fishing smacks by thousands, ere their crews
Can squeamishly invoke the Olympian gods
To look with pity.

STEPHAN. Earth-billows rose and fell,
Even where we stood on acres of hard stone ;
So that the citizens, pitched to and fro,
Lay wallowing, and were sick. When instantly,
Under the basements of our homes, we saw
Firm Tellus burst asunder, and our town,
Before our eyes, go to perdition.
Her towers, after a noisy overthrow,
Lay quiet in the grave, which then shut to,
Funereally becalmed.

LIBON. This let my age avouch.
(*Re-enter* IRENE and SAPPHIRA, with HESTA and HEBE.)

IPHIGENIA. Here come these noble matrons, scared
and white
As clotted cream. What cheer?

SAPPHIRA. Ask me not.
I shut mine eyes, even while my temples burst
With agony ; the earth did heave a sigh,

THE GREEK KALENDS

And shuddered in a passion as of grief.

IRENE. Did ye feel nothing here? Nor heard
nought? Oh,

I would not live to see another time
Like unto that just past!

IPHIGENIA. You felt the earthquake?

IRENE. Where are our husbands? Safe? All
men are safe.

For, by the happy ordering of the gods
To compass our deliverance, not a soul
Walked street or market-place or kept the house
That I beheld, when I beheld our burgh
Become a mouthful to the ground it stood on.

CYMON. Oh, be this true! Oh, let a roll be called,
By families.

HEBE. My lord, 'tis true.

HESTA. We watched.

WIFE. Euphrasia, hast lost thy tongue?

EUPHRASIA. Hist, I have hardly said a word to-day.

IPHIGENIA. Ye see how rash ye were against this
scribe

Who, reading oracles and omens well,
Wrote us prophetic riddles, whence we are safe,
And look not wise in the discovery.
Lay it to heart.

THE GREEK KALENDS

OGYGES. Apollos, great Apollos! Not Apollos but *Apollo*! Bestir, bestir; bring your garlands; bring your incense; hundreds of bleating bulls, and rakes of bellowing sheep; your bellowing lambs, and blood of lowing goats. And from me, oh, take my wife, my treasure; for she hath offended, with much foolish vain speech; but I give her as an expiatory offering; let her be cast down the new yawning rift.

ALL. Down with her! Down with her!

EUPHRASIA. I never spoke word all day!

WIFE. You never spoke a word?

EUPHRASIA. No, as I am a washerwoman.

WIFE. Thou spakest enough as a laundress.

EUPHRASIA. No, no; not a word!

OGYGES. Come, Euphrasia, thou must to the gulfy rift. And Apollos shall be washed in oil, like the statue of Saturn.

APOLLOS. No, no, no, no, no, no! Hear me. Certain men are raised up to teach folly gravely—we call them doctors in their several learnings. I, it seems, came into the world to teach grave wisdom foolishly. Therefore, attend and obey. Let the most fairest Iphigenia be your ruler; for I divine her to be as deeply ignorant of your true needs as ye are yourselves.

THE GREEK KALENDS

OGYGES. She shall reign over us! Iphigenia is our ruler.

ALL. Long live Queen Iphigenia!

IPHIGENIA. We have a jester here, who crowns his jests

With but a sorry jest upon myself.

This were as cruel mockery to me

As to yourselves, but that I have at hand

A counsellor to guide you and myself.

Cymon, I mean.

APOLLOS. This is beyond a jest,
Seven leagues toward madness.

CYMON. With me be well content ;
Since I content the lady of your choice,
Whose free choice makes me proud. No more debate ;
But put my words in act. We must take ship,
And sail across the heaven-reflecting sea,
To plant a colony. The skilful man,
The master in his trade, shall learn his worth ;
And honesty in handicraft shall get
Honour in our city ; we will have none idle ;—
Judicial Stephan, warlike Lycophron,
Never so high, but ye shall handle trowel,
No good on earth till ye are bricklayers.
Yea, thou, Ogyges, look to shoulder hod ;

THE GREEK KALENDS

While builders, joiners, stonemasons, and all
The furnishers of needful domicile
Shall bear their part ; the sick and helpless helped.

PORPHYRY. That be my work.

CYMON. Make our streets beautiful
With nobler statues, afterwards, dear friend.
Our town shall rise again out of her dust,
Like Phœnix, and thy inspired sculpture gaze
From every metope, pediment and frieze,
In Parian marble polished heavenly.
But, friends all, we will put our best of best
Into small things and great.

CARPENTER. I will build so that my houses, if
there be another earthquake, shall weather it, if
timber may ; joist, tie-beam nor principal will I put
in weak nor faulty ; good wood, good work, morticed
throughout. The like say all the trades.

ALL. Ay, ay, ay !

(Re-enter EROS.)

APOLLOS. Where hast thou been, good Eros ?

EROS. Tossed at the Great Bear.

APOLLOS. Thou wouldst darken the sky.

CYMON. Eros, put off that forehead of sour pride.
Now this old man upon the public purse,
Shall live for ever if it please the gods.

THE GREEK KALENDS

LIBON. I was promised ease; and looking for't in death,

Find peace and plenty.

PORPHYRY. And I, promised the Beautiful,
Find it in ministering tendance.

APOLLOS. And I—Jove laughs thereat!—
Seeking out mine own humour, escape death
But by the skin of my teeth.

IRENE. I, bidden "come and see"—
No more is written here, my jealous lord,—
Come, and see what?

HESTA. We were promised husbands.

IPHIGENIA. I free your slavery; and your wedding
day
Shall bring you a silver talent each.

STEPHAN. I have a nephew,
Lycophron's son, to wed you.

LYCOPHRON. Stay; I have a nephew,
Stephan's son born, to wed you.

STEPHAN. Stay!

IPHIGENIA. Two swains, two nymphs.

HEBE. We thank you, our kind mistress. Sirs, I will
Choose better.

HESTA. And I better again. Mistress, my dearest
thanks.

THE GREEK KALENDS

SAPPHIRA. I was to find my spouse ; and he is
most lost ;

Forbidden to come near me.

LYCOPHRON. We came to find revenge.

STEPHAN. And have to ask forgiveness.

IPHIGENIA. Lycophron, cherish Sapphira, for she
loves you :

Irene and Stephan, be at one together :

Cymon, take Iphigene.

CYMON. What each desires,

Contrariouſly, but perfectly is fulfilled.

EROS. Thou ſhalt never make me ſay ſo.

IPHIGENIA. Wherefore ?

EROS. Apollos, this your ſcrip aſſured me the
ſight of the moſt gnarled and croſs-grained trunk that
ever took root from Deucalion and Pyrrha ; one all
mental warts, wens, ſcabs, and wrinkles ; ſuch as
humanity would diſown if it could, but that the
brute creation will none of him. This you faithfully
promiſed me to gloat over ; and now you ſhew me
no more than theſe geese, ganders and goſlings.

APOLLOS. A moment, pray.

High Iphigene, lend me thy conſcience.

IPHIGENIA. Why do you call my glaſs my con-
ſcience ?

THE GREEK KALENDS

APOLLOS. It tells you what you are, and never
blabs,
Nor breaks the seal of maiden confidence.
Eros, peer in this magic crystal.

EROS. A looking glass ?

APOLLOS. What dost thou see ?

EROS. Nothing, except myself.

APOLLOS. Askest thou not a being warped and
wrenched,
By ill-conceiving spite, from symmetry
And just proportion ? Were thy body bent,
Hunch-back and bandy-leg, as is thy soul
By thy connivance left to grow awry,
No dullard who delights in mountebanks,
Monsters, and dwarfs, but took thee as his text
For braying at.

EROS. Now I see your jest.
Excellent, excellent ; oh, this pleases me !

CYMON. Are you content ? Nay, do not break the
glass.

APOLLOS. By no means ; stay awhile.

EROS. Why do you look over my shoulder ?

APOLLOS. To shew you another such.
Look ; for I must confess, in me there lurks
A certain merry malice, too well pleased

THE GREEK KALENDS

To find a neighbour's fault. Good fellow-men,
We are all tarred with a brush.

EROS. I will sit under a vine, and count the sour
grapes overhead!

APOLLOS. Better blow a dandelion clock, and be
happy.

Hand back the mirror.

EROS. I have seen enough in it.

APOLLOS. 'Tis a good friend ;
We who look here see less to praise than mend.

IPHIGENIA. But now, my homeless people, yarely,
yare !

Search heedfully if any need our care
Or surgical help.

CYMON. Then heedfully embark,
Carrying our salvage goods abroad ere dark.
Remember, not a one his sail unfurls
Before the other ; so the word let pass.
Lead, noblest Iphigene, among all girls
Unfoiled emerald mid beads of glass.
Farewell, farewell, farewell thou speechless tomb
Wherein I fancy our primæval sires
Laughing a silent laughter in the gloom,
To see us playthings of Cyclopien fires.
Without delay, we seek a larger room,

THE GREEK KALENDS

New skies, new thoughts, new wisdom, new desires.
A song! A song, before we take the oar,
Ere we weigh anchor, off this wave-worn shore!

APOLLOS (*Sings*).

Mariner and the shipwright skilled,
Whoso is free of the shipwright guild,
Whoso can handle craft at sea,
Man or boy, such are for me.

Timber be flesh, and we be soul;
By sunken rock and shelving shoal,
The life of a ship, be it brief or long,
Yet the life of a ship were a poet's song.

She may be broken by wind and waves,
Yielding her crew to the deep sea caves;
Or rot at last after voyages cease
And all who manned her sleep in peace.

Led by the Pole Star and Charlie's Wain,
Washed from weather to lee on the main,
Be it thine, good ship, with the storm to cope;
Be ours the skill; and the gods our hope!

HEBE (*Sings*).

As the Carthaginian Queen
Built, upon the water's edge,
Such a city as, I ween,
Had amazed this later age,
By Apollo, I allege

THE GREEK KALENDS

So we build our town anew,
For that the earthquake overthrew.
Oh, to make friends with our new home,
When to our new home we come !

Wall on wall, she'll grow a-pace ;
Tower by tower, beside the shore !
We will praise her to her face,
Though we cannot love her more
Than the home that heretofore
Hath been ours upon this isle,
Ruined in so short a while.
Oh, to part friends, old home ! I trust
We part good friends, sith part we must !

APOLLOS *and* HEBE (*Sing*).

Hellas, here's to thee !
For ever, as ever, now
There is sun upon thy brow ;
Thou art daylight ! Common doom,
The fummy urn, the gloomy tomb,
All the tragic crime
Of thy magic prime
Never for a moment dim thee !
Lo, an ivy-bowl I brim thee !
Honey-sweet wine of Helycon,
Never is its flavour gone.
All gods bless our Colony ;

THE GREEK KALENDS

Keep our walls and keep our ships ;
Zeus, keep folly from our lips ;
Zeus, keep folly from our hands ;
Keep invasion from our lands.

(Exeunt CYMON and IPHIGENIA, APOLLOS and EROS, PORPHYRY, with STEPHAN and LYCOPHRON bearing LIBON, and IRENE, SAPPHIRA, HESTA, HEBE, APOLLOS' SERVANT, EUPHRASIA, CARPENTER'S WIFE, and their FELLOWS.)

OGYGES. Shall we pull an oar in this colony ? Shall we be galley-slaves ?

CARPENTER. I have no time to talk. The tools to him can use them !

(Exeunt.)

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